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Compiled by Mrs N. D. Blamire

Entries are in single list with reference to:

(1) every significant mention of each species, not only in titles, but also within the text of papers, notes and letters, including all those appearing in such lists as the 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1987', but excluding those in 'Monthly reports', 'Recent reports', 'News and comment', requests and reviews;

(2) scientific nomenclature under generic names only and following *The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1984);

(3) authors of all papers, notes, reviews and letters, and photographers; papers are referred to by their titles, other contributions as 'note on', 'review of', etc.;

(4) a few subject headings, i.e. 'Announcements', 'Breeding', 'Display', 'Editorials', 'Field characters', 'Food', 'News and comment', 'Obituaries', 'Rarities Committee', 'Recorders', 'Recent reports', 'Requests', 'Roosting' and 'Voice';

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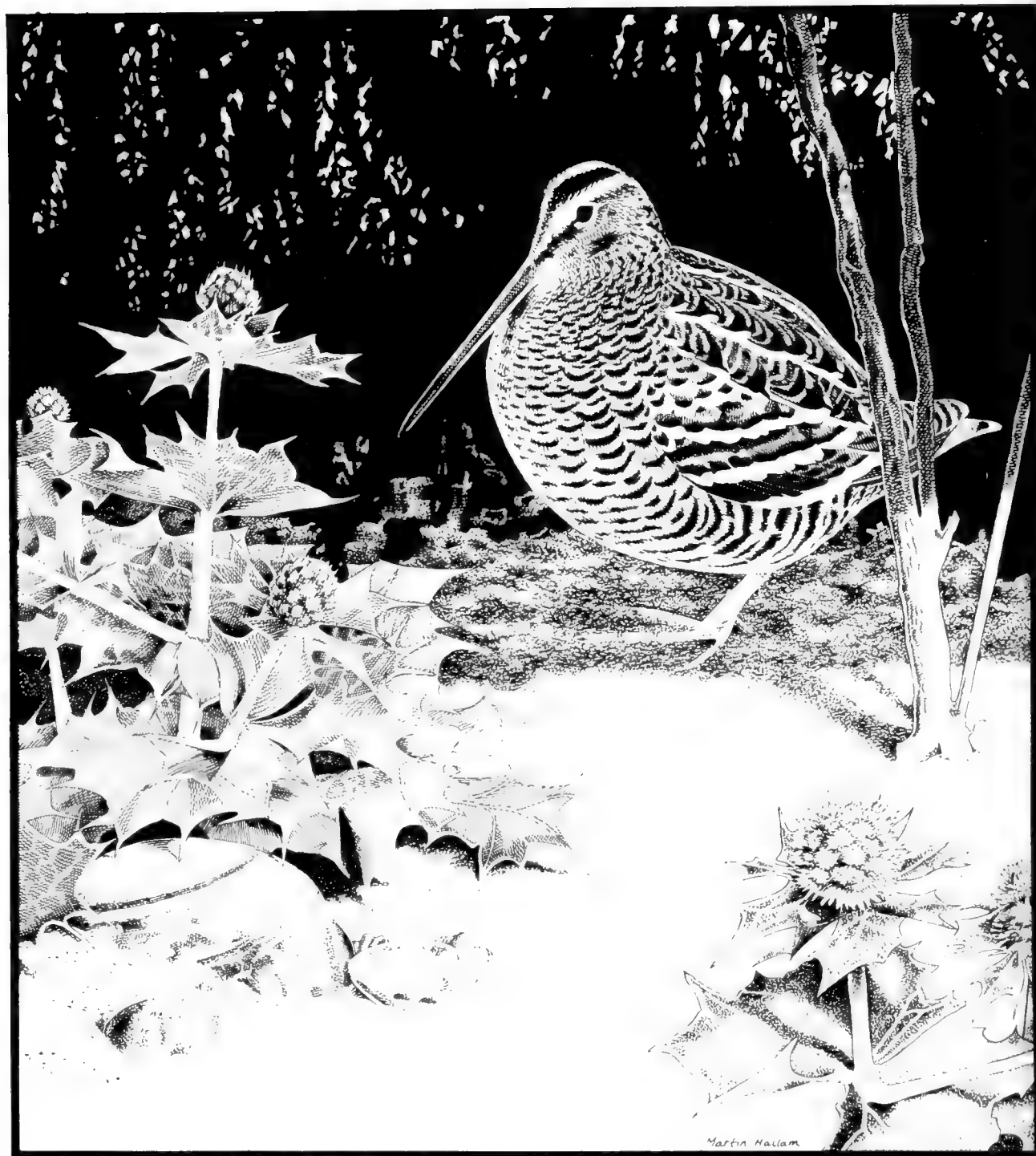
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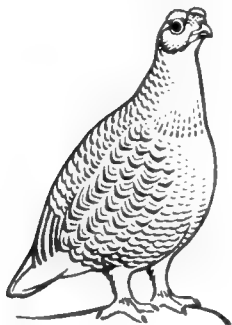
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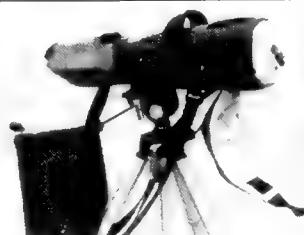
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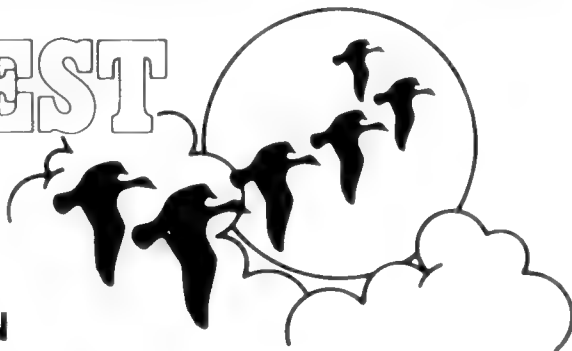
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by ROBERT W. FURNESS

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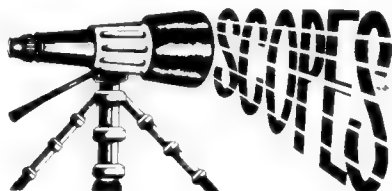
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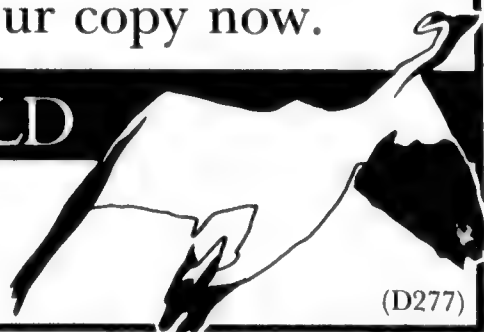
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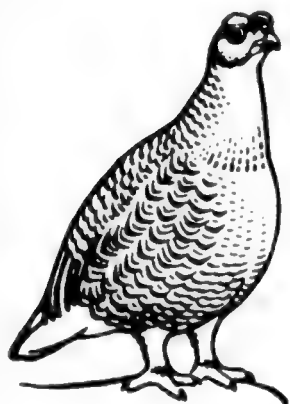
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(D271)



# British Birds

VOLUME 81 NUMBER 1 JANUARY 1988



## New Editorial Board member

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We are delighted to announce that Robin Prytherch has agreed to join the *British Birds* Editorial Board. Robin's name will already be familiar to most *BB* readers, as co-compiler with Mike Everett of our monthly 'News and comment' column, author or co-author of various

1. Robin Prytherch (*Michael J. Harvey*)



notes and papers, such as 'Pied-billed Grebe in Somerset: a bird new to Great Britain and Ireland' (*Brit. Birds* 58: 305-309) and 'Field identification of Long-eared and Short-eared Owls' (*Brit. Birds* 69: 281-287), and precision-illustrator of scientific contributions such as Dr K. E. L. Simmons' *The Sunning Behaviour of Birds* (1987). Robin has worked for the past 19 years as a member of the BBC Natural History Unit team, and is currently engaged in a number of projects all involving birds. Nevertheless—despite much home and overseas travelling—he still finds time to enjoy his birdwatching on his 'local patch', in Avon, where his studies on Buzzards *Buteo buteo* continue with undiminished enthusiasm.

# Black Grouse in Wales, spring 1986



*S. J. Grove, P. Hope Jones, A. R. Malkinson, D. H. Thomas and  
I. Williams*

**I**n most countries within its Palearctic distribution, the Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* is thought to be in serious decline (Cramp & Simmons 1980). In Wales, since the late 1940s, there has been some extension in range and increase in numbers, perhaps linked with new conifer plantations (Parslow 1973), but certainly since 1980, and probably since the mid-1970s, the Welsh population has once again been in decline (P. H. Jones *in prep.*).

Recent changes in land-use—especially conversion of heather *Calluna vulgaris* and bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* moorland to grassland, heavier grazing pressure, and large-scale forestry operations—may be an important factor affecting the current status of the species in Wales. In view of these potential impacts, surveys were mounted in 1985 and 1986, carried out by the RSPB, and funded by the Forestry Commission; their main aim was to ascertain the distribution and numbers of Black Grouse throughout Wales, a survey/census never previously conducted.

## Methods

In general, Black Grouse are secretive, though easily disturbed, and their response to human presence is not always predictable—they may flush at long distance and fly out of sight, or sit tight and remain undetected (except by dogs or radio-telemetry). On many mornings and, at certain times of year, some evenings, males will gather at leks, where they may be detected, approached and studied fairly readily; females, however, appear only briefly at lek sites in order to mate, and are less frequently observed there.

In view of the large area to be covered, the different conspicuousness of the sexes, and the short time available for survey, it was decided to take male Black Grouse as the essential count unit and to locate as many leks as possible. The field survey was therefore conducted over three spring months—which included the period when lekking activity should be at its height (Lack 1939).

During 1985, a questionnaire survey had elicited information on sites where Black Grouse had been known to occur in the recent past. This survey formed the basis for the initial selection of sites to be visited in 1986, and further information was gleaned by the team from local naturalists,

foresters, farmers, gamekeepers, county bird recorders and landowners.

During the field survey of 1986, selected sites (and their surrounding areas) were given exploratory daytime inspection in March and April, and they were subsequently visited at dawn during April and May in order to find leks and to count the males present. Calls of males can be heard over a considerable distance: on calm days, they were sometimes audible at up to 2,000m, thus facilitating identification of lek sites.

Details of grouse numbers, of vegetation at the lek and its surrounds, and of various other factors, were entered on standard forms. Black Grouse found displaying at a distance of 200m or more apart were considered to be occupying separate leks. The raw data are held by the Research Department of the RSPB.

Results

A total of 91 leks was located in Wales in spring 1986, representing 232 individual male Black Grouse. At a few localities, males were known to be present but were not lekking (or the lek could not be found); adding these individuals to those found at leks gave an estimate of 264 males for the whole of Wales. Only 41 females were seen at or near the leks. Of the 91 leks, 41 were of single males, the remainder mainly of two or three males, with a maximum of 14 males (table 1). The distribution of these leks is shown in fig. 1.

Table 1. Numbers of male Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* at leks in Wales, spring 1986

	NO. MALES AT LEK														Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
No. of leks	43	18	14	4	2	3	0	4	1	0	0	1	0	1	91
Total birds	43	36	42	16	10	18	0	32	9	0	0	12	0	14	232

Most leks were at altitudes of between 300 m and 500 m above sea level, though there was a considerable range between the lowest at 180 m and the highest at 600 m (table 2).

Table 2. Altitudinal distribution of Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* leks in Wales, spring 1986

Altitude range (m above sea level)	No. of leks
560-600	2
510-550	4
460-500	9
410-450	29
360-400	22
310-350	16
260-300	5
210-250	3
160-200	1

Twenty-one leks were sited within conifer plantations, 27 were within 100 m of a plantation, 19 lay between 100 and 200 m away, with the remaining 24 between 200 and 700 m away.

Lek sites varied considerably in terms of vegetation type. Most were on level, or only slightly sloping, open ground with low vegetation, often with acid grassland or low heather as important components, though with rushes *Juncus* and mosses often also present. On a wider scale, land-use up to 1 km away from leks frequently included afforestation and thicket-stage conifers, but also in many cases acid grassland and heather and—less frequently—a range of habitats such as pole-stage conifers, forest roads,

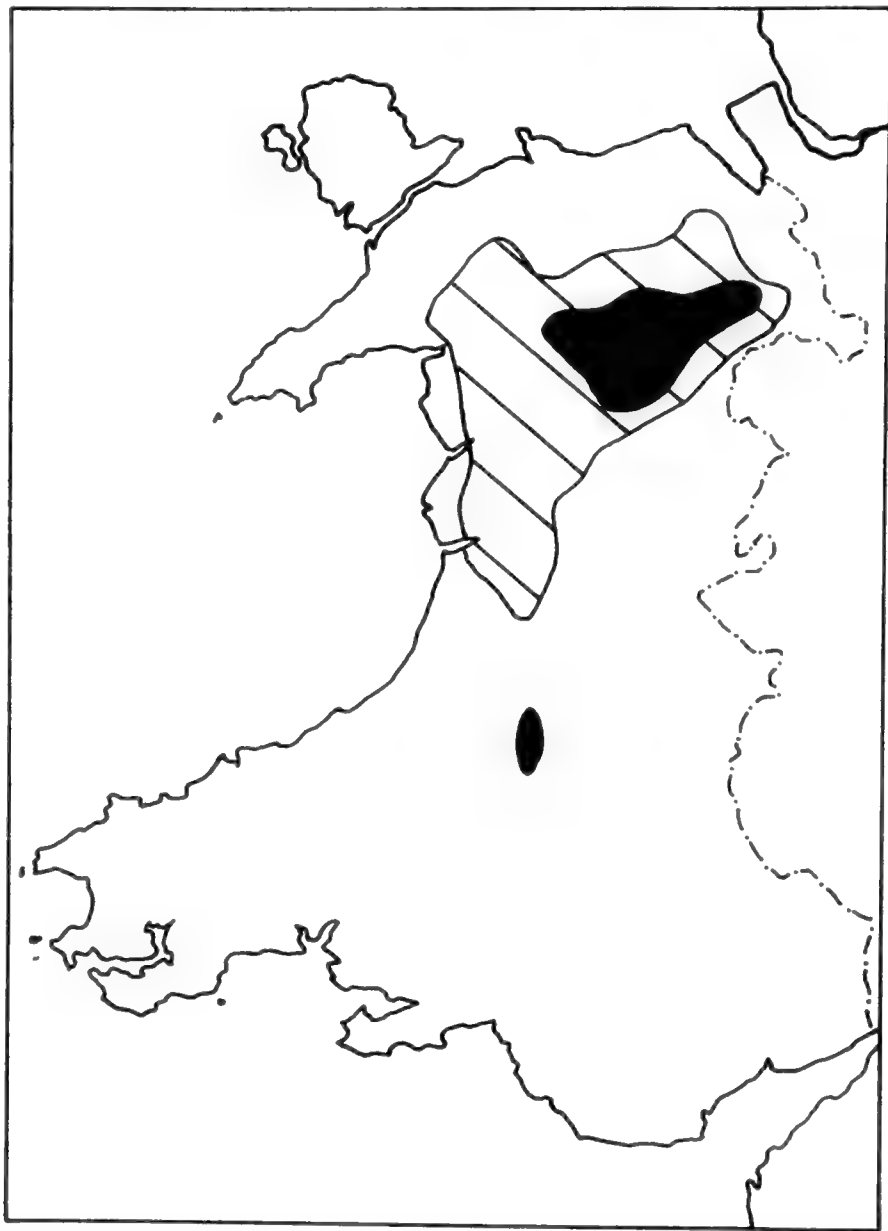


Fig. 1. Distribution of Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* leks in Wales, spring 1986. Black = zone of leks with four or more males; hatched = zone where leks were of only one to three males (though such leks also occurred within the black zones)

and a variety of upland vegetation. In only five cases were occupied buildings present. Sitka spruce *Picea sitchensis* was the tree species most often associated with the lek, but this is likely to reflect the planting composition of modern forests rather than a conscious selection on the part of the Black Grouse.

Single-male leks predominated in mainly-forest habitats (22, or 65%, of

**Table 3. Broad habitat categories comprising major components of land type within stated distances of 76 lek sites of Welsh Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* for which these data were collected**

Many plots included mosaic of habitat types, but this table has been compiled to show numbers of plots in three main broad groupings

Habitat category	10 m × 10 m	100 m × 100 m	1 km × 1 km
Coniferous forest	24	26	34
Semi-natural vegetation on open land	38	37	34
Enclosed farmland	14	13	8

**Table 4. Numbers of male Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* in relation to habitat within 1 km of their Welsh lek sites**

Habitat category	NO. MALES (NO. OF LEKS)		Totals
	At single-male leks	At leks of more than one male	
Coniferous forest	22 (22)	42 (12)	64 (34)
Semi-natural vegetation on open land	15 (15)	74 (19)	89 (34)
Enclosed farmland	1 (1)	26 (7)	27 (8)

34 leks); they were nearer equality in mainly open, semi-natural habitats (15, or 44%, of 34 leks); but they comprised only one, or 13%, of eight leks dominated by enclosed farmland.

**Discussion**

The efficacy of the survey is dependent mainly upon two factors: knowing the types of terrain where the species is likely to occur, and having prior information on the occurrence of leks (or at least on sightings of males). We are unable to guarantee full coverage of either, but further investigations later during 1986 failed to detect the presence of any sites which were missed by the survey. Angelstam (1978) suggested that the total population of males could be counted if the solitary displaying males were counted as well as the communally lekking males; whilst some Welsh leks (especially of single males) must inevitably have been missed, if Angelstam's suggestion is correct, and applicable in Wales, then it is likely that the 1986 survey will have recorded a very high percentage of the males present in the population. It is concluded, therefore, that the male segment of the Black Grouse population in Wales during the spring of 1986 comprised a minimum of 264, and probably no more than 300, individuals. The survey was not designed to assess the numbers of females; the sex ratio in Black Grouse can vary considerably, and, since this parameter is not known for Wales, we therefore consider it premature to produce an extrapolated estimate for total numbers of Black Grouse in Wales.

Comparison of our results (fig. 1) with the species' distribution in Wales during the five breeding seasons 1968-72 (Sharrock 1976) (fig. 2) indicates a retraction of range towards north/central Wales, but, whilst this seems likely to be true, the two surveys were quite different in aims and execution, and may not bear too close a comparison.

The occurrence of single, territorial male Black Grouse has been recorded in Continental literature, but its relatively high frequency in Wales has not previously been reported. Angelstam (1978) found that the proportion of such birds in the male numbers present on his Swedish study site varied from 1% to 29% between years, whilst Ellison *et al.* (1981) found that, in the French Alps, the proportion of solitary males at four study plots was high: between 31% and 59%. Very little is yet known about the structure of the Black Grouse population in Wales, so it is not possible to comment critically on the social status of these solitary displaying males. It is possible, however, that their apparently rather high proportion might reflect not so much the social or age structure of the population as the simple fact that Wales in 1986 had low numbers of Black Grouse scattered over a wide geographical spread in a fragmented, small and declining population, with a 'core zone' of well-populated leks, and a wide fringe of soloists and small leks.

One early assumption in the planning of this survey was that the majority of males would be present in spring at well-known traditional lek sites. This is, however, now known to be a false premise because, in areas such as Wales (where local Black Grouse populations are often linked with new afforestation in a rapidly changing countryside), the concept of a traditional lek site is often not tenable. Local distribution can change quite rapidly under these circumstances, militating against a stable dispersion.

2. Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* on the short-grass surface of a Welsh lek site (John Lawton Roberts)





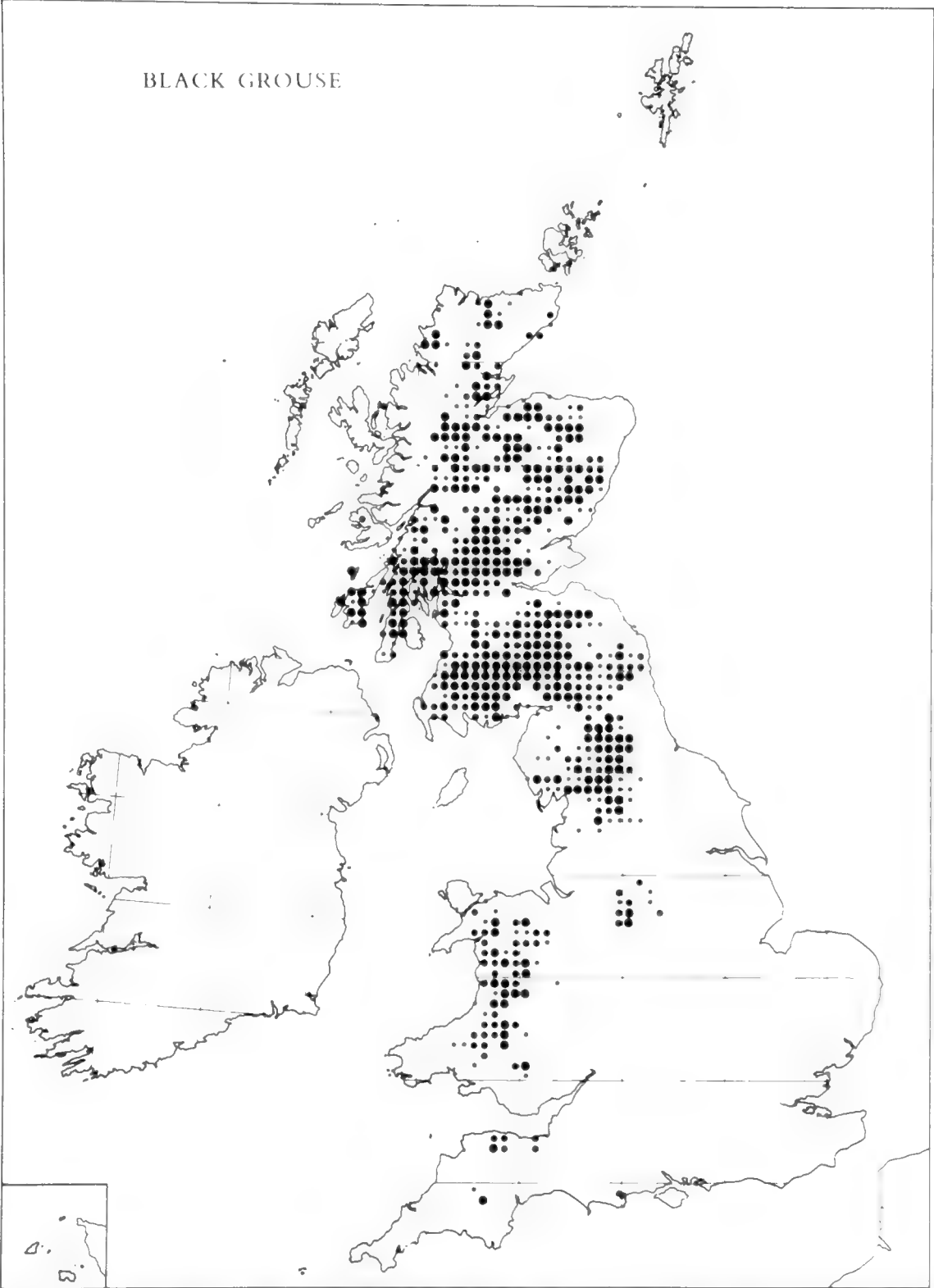


Fig. 2. Distribution of Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* in 1968-72. Large dots, confirmed breeding; medium dots, probable breeding; small dots, possible breeding. Reproduced from *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland* (Sharrock 1976) by permission of the publishers, T. & A. D. Poyser Ltd

With increasing use and management of the more remote areas of Welsh countryside, there is inevitably a concomitant increase in disturbance level: from low-flying jet aircraft, through leisure activities such as walking, motorcycling and shooting, to intermittently intensive agricultural and forestry operations. All of these factors were noted during this 1986 survey.



3. Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* sparring on the mainly short-grass surface of a Welsh lek (John Lawton Roberts)

The precise impact of these practices on the well-being of the Black Grouse remains unknown, but all are likely to reduce the stability of a quiet environment and—in some cases—to act against the continued survival of small local populations. In an English study, Hudson (1986) considered that a general decline in numbers of Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus* was linked with fewer gamekeepers and an increase in potential predators such as Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* and foxes *Vulpes vulpes*; it is possible that these two factors may also be affecting Red and Black Grouse in Wales.

4. Photographic hide set up at a Welsh lek of Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix*: the site is on short turf surrounded by coarser vegetation of heather *Calluna vulgaris* (foreground) and rushes *Juncus* (middle distance), with 'escape cover' of medium-sized trees in the background (John Lawton Roberts)



Changes in upland land-use have become increasingly evident in Wales in the past few decades, and most of the Black Grouse population was by 1986 closely associated with (and possibly dependent upon) managed conifer plantations. Its survival therefore hinges upon a management regime which is sympathetic towards wildlife in general and Black Grouse in particular. It is hoped that the results of this 1986 survey will further an awareness of the status of a declining species, and foster the will and the action to safeguard Black Grouse and their habitats.

### Acknowledgments

We are primarily grateful to the Forestry Commission in Wales (and especially their Private Forestry and Environment Officer, Alistair Scott) for backing the project and funding it, and to Dr Colin Bibby and Fred Currie for supervisory help. We greatly appreciate the permission readily afforded us by numerous landowners, and the information provided by grouse-watchers far too numerous to name individually. We also thank Colin Bibby and Roger Lovegrove for helpful comments on an early draft.

### Summary

A survey of Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* in Wales during spring 1986 yielded 232 males at 91 leks. A minimum of 264 males was present, and it is unlikely that the true total was higher than 300. Most leks (80) lay between 300 m and 500 m above sea level, with the full range from 180 m to 600 m. Of the 91 leks, 47% had only one male, and 19% of all lekking males were seen at one-male leks. Lek sites were mainly on level, or fairly level, open ground with low vegetation; most were within 200 m of the edge of a conifer plantation.

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S. J. Grove, P. Hope Jones, A. R. Malkinson, D. H. Thomas and I. Williams, c/o Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

## Seventy-five years ago...

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'Can Mr. Witherby prove that the Crossbill has not bred in Ireland for the last hundred years, or five hundred years if you like? It is pretty easy to make an assertion of that kind but very difficult of proof; we must remember that whereas one hundred years ago there were few observers of the movements of birds in the British Islands, there are now thousands, and that the fauna of Ireland was perhaps less well known than any other part.' (*Brit. Birds* 6: 263, January 1913).

# Obituary

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## Stanley Cramp OBE, BA (1913-1987)

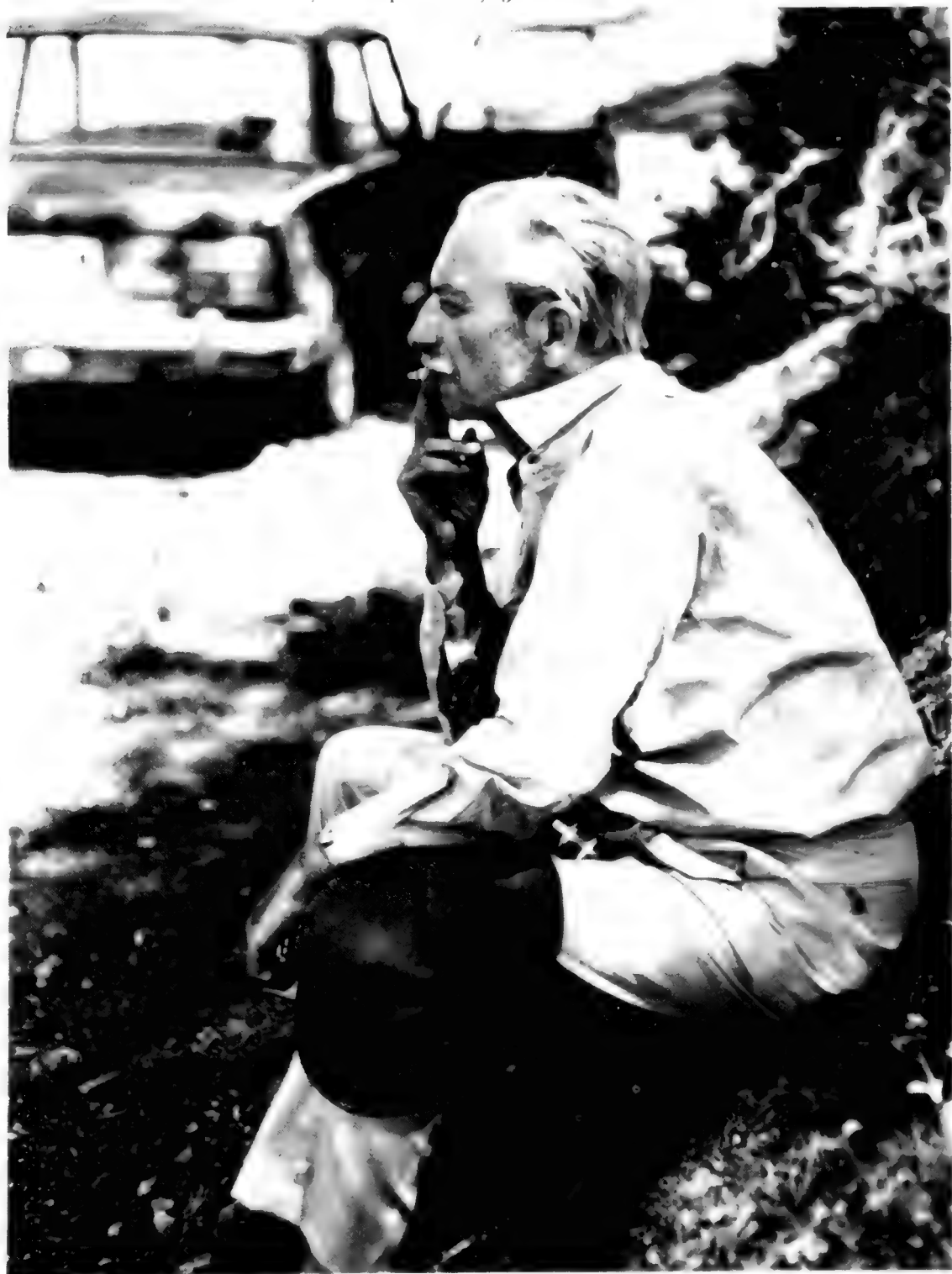
**S**tanley Cramp, who died aged 73 on 20th August 1987, will probably be remembered best for his achievement as Chief Editor of *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. This he had come near to completing after some 23 years of sustained effort, with vol. 5 in press, vol. 6 largely prepared, and vol. 7 already partly in draft. Hardly less notable, however, was his Senior Editorship of *British Birds*, which he took over in 1963, remaining as Board Chairman until the end—a record two-thirds as long as that of its founder, H. F. Witherby. The fact that two previous senior editors chose to continue serving under him on the Board shows the confidence which he commanded and the teamwork characteristic of *British Birds*.

While his leading ornithological distinction had been as President of the British Ornithologists' Union, his many other achievements included those as Chairman of the Scientific Research Committee of the British Trust for Ornithology during a most critical phase of its expansion, as a leader of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds at a corresponding growth period, his formative contributions to the programmes of the London Natural History Society and eventually of the Seabird Group, his initiatives for the Council of Nature and CoEnCo, and internationally his successful assignment for the European Commission on developing a sound scientific foundation for bird protection throughout the Community. All these, apart from his individual work, would amply qualify him as one of the most influential and productive ornithologists of his age. Indeed, it was one of his most notable merits that whenever he applied himself to something that needed doing in ornithology or in conservation there was usually a solid result to show for it, no matter how difficult the task.

Born in Cheshire on 24th September 1913, he had to make his own way in the world. After taking his degree at Manchester University, he embarked on a Civil Service career in Customs and Excise, but birds were his lifelong interest. Given his limited background and initial opportunities, as well as his methodical disposition, his attainment of a recognised position in ornithology inevitably took time, and he became well-known only during his forties. With characteristic realism, he first concentrated on an aspect which had been neglected scientifically and yet was most readily accessible for his studies—the numbers, habits and adaptations of birds in cities. He picked out as decisive their problems of finding nesting places, of access to suitable foods and of accommodating themselves to life at close quarters with people, but he recognised the significance of historical records, population patterns and trends, and changing behaviour. He was never a museum or laboratory ornithologist, but as a field man he was keenly aware of the need to learn everything relevant from these and other backgrounds. His firm confidence was based on ample and precise knowledge, gathered and employed with critical care.

His move to London as a young man quickly brought him in touch with a lively young group already pursuing urban bird studies. Encouraged by his flair for teamwork, he readily assumed a leading role in this growing branch of ornithology, culminating with his 1952 paper for *British Birds* (jointly with W. G. Teagle) on 'The birds of Inner London'. His approach is perceptively appraised by Robert Spencer in his review of 'Changes in patterns of behaviour' in the history of the BTO entitled *Enjoying Ornithology* (1983). It was as a spin-off from these studies that he developed a specialist interest in the repercussions of environmental pollution on

5. Stanley Cramp, Turkey, June 1973 (R. F. Porter)



birds and on the biosphere. This became instrumental in enabling him to contribute effectively to the conservation movement during the 1960s and 1970s.

With growing maturity and a more secure position in life, he was able to undertake some modest ornithological travel and to acquire an eventually impressive experience of the birds of the Western Palearctic, beyond which he hardly ventured, although in later life he developed an interest in its seabirds as well.

His impressive capacity for synthesising vast amounts of data on a European scale, and for co-ordinating a fast-moving small army of field observers was well demonstrated in his 1960 three-part paper in *British Birds*, jointly with A. Pettet and J. T. R. Sharrock, on 'The irruption of tits in autumn 1957'. Occurrences in space and time, together with numbers, movements and behaviour, held a paramount place in his interests. He developed a real mastery of incorporating massive data accurately into clear and readable accounts.

Although it could hardly have been predicted ten years earlier, he had fully equipped himself for the top rôles which were to occupy him for the final quarter-century of his life. Indeed, his somewhat late development proved an asset, enabling him to take full advantage of the massive expansion of ornithological knowledge and ideas occurring around and after the middle of the century. Although ornithologically self-educated, and able to become a full-time professional only after taking early retirement from the Civil Service, he always managed to find plenty of hours for bird study, and to use them to good effect. While he looked the archetype of a confirmed bachelor, evidence exists that he underwent a brief and unhappy lapse from that condition, more than 40 years ago, about which it seems best to follow his own example by saying no more.

From the middle 1950s, the then Editors of *British Birds* were concerned with expanding the journal's frail economic base to enable it to meet ever-greater demands for service to readers and the growing complexity of ornithological activities. Over and above such direct burdens was the nagging awareness that Witherby's great *Handbook of British Birds* (1938-41) was beginning to call for an even more substantial up-to-date replacement which none but the editors could muster the capacity to undertake, and which would severely tax their resources. The dark patch of the bogus 'Hastings rarities', which had first to be cleared away by a heavy and embarrassing surgical operation culminating in 1962 (*Brit. Birds* 55: 281-384), delayed a start, which then could no longer be avoided.

The concept of a new standard work based merely upon 'British' birds had, however, become outdated, as was demonstrated by the engagingly old-world image of D. A. Bannerman's monumental *Birds of the British Isles* appearing around that time. A worthy successor to the *Handbook* would have to cover the entire Western Palearctic, but bringing together a fully international team to produce and fund it was still out of reach. As a compromise, it was necessary to fall back on a British-based project with substantial European contributions, sponsored by a major non-commercial publisher.

Things came to a head soon after Stanley Cramp had become Senior Editor. Although I handled the original preparations, and persuaded the Oxford University Press to take on publication, my commitments for the International Biological Program and other projects, plus the inevitable heavy dependence editorially on the data, resources and manpower of *British Birds*, commended the alternative of transferring the top responsibility for *Birds of the Western Palearctic* to Stanley.

None of us then foresaw quite how immense the combined burden of *BB* and *BWP* would be, and had we done so we would have dismissed it as impossible for Stanley to carry it through as successfully as he in fact did. In the event, however, the task will have taken more than three times as long as Witherby's *Handbook*, and has involved immensely worse problems than those which the great Witherby himself found it a struggle to surmount. This is not the time or place to enlarge upon them, but there can be no finer tribute to Stanley Cramp than that he brought possibly the greatest of all ornithological enterprises well in sight of completion in his lifetime.

Stanley's character, although strong and definite, does not lend itself easily to description. It was highly self-controlled and reticent, avoiding anything colourful, dramatic or demonstrative. His gift was for quiet, matter-of-fact exchanges and actions, playing down personalities, irrelevancies or avoidable occasions for controversy. His sense of direction, his instant good judgments of people and options, his evident integrity, and steady unmistakable dedication to success in the common cause aroused confidence and a sympathetic response, especially as he showed readiness to concede if deadlock threatened. Even in the field, any excitement aroused by unexpected and interesting sights was skilfully hidden, and his critical faculties were left unimpaired. Yet, while keeping to himself his feelings and many of the facts of his life, he was far from being a loner. He enjoyed the company of those whom he respected and trusted, and his friendships were durable and varied; rather surprisingly, some Russian ornithologists were among those with whom he had quite close links.

He went to an extreme only as a chain-smoker of cigarettes; the habit seemed particularly out of place in an expert on the evil effects of pollution, but no amount of evidence or logic would shake his addiction. While it failed to bring his life to an early end, it certainly aggravated his coughing and other disabilities, which worsened enough to interfere sadly and visibly with his activities during his latest years, when he found increasing difficulty in walking or even in talking on the telephone. His naturally tough physique, which had carried him so well through so many years, had been strained beyond its limits, and he finally fell prey to a stroke and an attack of pneumonia.

Very much an ornithologist of his time, wide-ranging, open-minded, yet disciplined and receptive to constructive challenges, Stanley turned in a performance much greater than could reasonably have been expected of him. He used his considerable but easily underrated talents to leave a remarkably solid and well-balanced legacy for the future, from which the entire world of ornithology will benefit.

E. M. NICHOLSON



# European news

With this twenty-second selection, we are again delighted to be able to include records from 25 countries, and to welcome the first contributions from the German Democratic Republic and from Israel. New contacts in unrepresented West Palearctic countries will be very welcome. The official correspondents whose detailed six-monthly reports are summarised here are acknowledged at the end. This feature is intended as a news service; anyone requiring further information or quoting records in other publications should refer to the literature of the relevant country.

If you have made observations in any of the countries not included here and do not know to whom records should be sent, we suggest that you send them to *British Birds*, and we shall do our best to pass them on to the appropriate person; for countries which *are* included here, we suggest that you send a copy of your records to the relevant 'European news' correspondent listed at the end of this summary.

Records awaiting formal verification by national rarities committees are indicated by an asterisk(\*).

Unless otherwise stated, all records refer to single individuals

**Red-throated Diver** *Gavia stellata* FINLAND  
Population estimate: from about 360 breeding pairs known in 1987, total population estimated to be 600-800 breeding pairs.

**Black-throated Diver** *Gavia arctica* FINLAND  
Population estimate: 4,600 pairs in 1987.

**White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* SWEDEN  
Highest annual total: 37 records in 1985 is new peak.

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* ITALY  
Population increase: breeding pairs increased by about 100 pairs since 1983, to 631-850 pairs in June 1986.

**Slavonian Grebe** *Podiceps auritus* POLAND  
Third breeding record: pair with four chicks at Białystok fish-ponds in 1985 (second breeding was in same place in 1981, and first breeding at Kolno Lake in 1972).

**Albatross** *Diomedea* SPAIN First for Strait of Gibraltar: west at Punta Secreta during easterly gale on 15th March 1987.

**Manx Shearwater** *Puffinus puffinus* CANARY ISLANDS Confirmed breeding: La Palma in 1987; also detected at night on Tenerife, La Gomera and El Hierro. SWEDEN Fourth record of race *mauretanicus*: Rödkär, south of

Varberg, on 17th June 1987. YUGOSLAVIA Second record for Slovenia since 1878: over 1,000 in Bay of Trieste, in three flocks, including one of approximately 700, on 14th September 1986.

**Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis* SPAIN  
Second record: *P. a. baroli* in Cádiz on 12th May 1986\* (first was in November 1981, *Brit. Birds* 78: 338).

**Audubon's Shearwater** *Puffinus lherminieri* ISRAEL First record: Tel Aviv beach during January 1984. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**White-faced Petrel** *Pelagodroma marina* CANARY ISLANDS First record and first breeding: a few pairs discovered on eastern islets in 1987. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* MOROCCO  
Second record: adult flying south off Oued Massa on 5th January 1987\* (first concerned two immatures off Oualidia on 14th September 1979). (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Squacco Heron** *Ardeola valloides* DENMARK



Sixth record: Vorskø during 16th-18th May 1987 (fifth was in October 1979, *Brit. Birds* 73: 573-574). SWEDEN Seventh record: Tornerö, Lund, during 7th-10th June 1987.

**Western Reef Heron** *Egretta gularis* MOROCCO Tenth record: dark-phase with 12 Little Egrets *E. garzetta* on islet off Essaouira on 23rd May 1986 (ninth was in April 1986, *Brit. Birds* 80: 322).

**White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Breeding decline: reduction in number of occupied nests from 1,007 in 1984 to 940 in 1985 and 918 in 1986. DENMARK Continued decline: only 12 breeding pairs in 1987. (Cf. decreases in the Netherlands, the Federal Republic of Germany and Portugal, *Brit. Birds* 80: 322.)

**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* SWEDEN Twelfth record: Getterön on 31st May 1986.

**White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons* MOROCCO Second record: adult with Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* at Merzouga Lake on 30th March 1987.

**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser* GIBRALTAR Third record: 13th April 1987.

**Barnacle Goose** *Branta leucopsis* SWEDEN Population increase: 640-645 pairs breeding on Öland and Gotland in 1986 (cf. previous summary, *Brit. Birds* 77: 234).

**American Wigeon** *Anas americana* SWEDEN Tenth record: Getterön during 3rd May to 2nd June 1987.

**Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* SWEDEN Sixth to eighth records: pair at Mårdängsjön during 7th-8th May 1987, male at Storsjön on 15th May 1987, and female at Strandstuguviken on 18th May 1987 (third to fifth records were in 1981, 1982 and 1983, *Brit. Birds* 77: 234).

**Shoveler** *Anas clypeata* MOROCCO Highest winter count: 11,360 in wildfowl census in January 1987.

**Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina* HUNGARY First confirmed breeding: female with ducklings at Fertő, Neusiedlersee, on 4th July 1986. About five breeding pairs at Mocs, Kisbáton, in 1987 (cf. range expansion or increases in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Switzerland, *Brit. Birds* 78: 639).

**Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* SPAIN Second record: male at Medina Sidonia, Cádiz, on 4th May 1985\* (first was in 1978).

**King Eider** *Somateria spectabilis* HUNGARY Second record: immature male on Danube near Visegrád during 3rd to 6th April 1986 (this is first twentieth-century record). SWEDEN Highest annual total: approximately 90 during 1986 is almost double previous highest annual total.

**Steller's Eider** *Polysticta stelleri* NETHERLANDS Third record: Lelystad on 28th January 1987. SWEDEN Highest annual total: increase continues, with 280 reported during 1986.

**Hooded Merganser** *Mergus cucullatus* NORWAY First record: adult male at Hordaland in late September 1985. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis* DENMARK Second record: female at Tofte Sø during 24th to 26th June 1987. NORWAY Second record: two males at Lofoten during 16th May to 10th June 1985. SPAIN First record: female shot at Ebro Delta between October 1983 and February 1984 (male on 15th November 1985, *Brit. Birds* 80: 10, now becomes second record). (Cf. recent records in Belgium, France and Switzerland, *Brit. Birds* 80: 10.)

**White-headed Duck** *Oxyura leucocephala* NETHERLANDS Eighth record: Utrecht during February and March 1987 (seventh was in 1985, *Brit. Birds* 78: 339).

**Black-shouldered Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* MOROCCO Extralimital sightings: near Guerfif on 7th January 1987 and at Selouane on 4th February 1987, both far east of normal range.

**White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC Population estimate: stable at 115 pairs in 1985.

**Lammergeier** *Gypaetus barbatus* SPAIN Census: 40 pairs in Spanish Pyrénées in spring 1986; of 36 pairs monitored, 33 known to have laid eggs, raising 29 fledged young (cf. 35 pairs in 1985, *Brit. Birds* 80: 10).

**Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* HUNGARY Seventh record: Gerecse Mountain

on 9th June 1987. SWEDEN Fourth record: Hornborgasjön on 31st May 1987. SWITZERLAND Ninth record: Lentigny on 12th May 1987.

**Lappet-faced Vulture** *Torgos tracheliotus* ISRAEL Only five individuals of *T. t. negevensis* remain: egg from nest of pair near Eilat taken for incubation at Tel Aviv University and a second hatched, but the chick fell from the nest and was taken into captivity. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus* GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC Population estimate: approximately 30 pairs in 1985.

**Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus* GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC Population estimate: approximately 35 pairs in 1985.

**Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus* DENMARK Highest-ever spring count: 1,050 migrants passing Gilleleje on 11th April 1987.

**Levant Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter brevipes* ISRAEL Record passage: 44,600 past Kfar Kassem during autumn 1986, and 49,836 at Eilat in spring 1987, with 22,747 on 26th April.

**Rough-legged Buzzard** *Buteo lagopus* FRANCE Winter influx: 20-30 mainly in northeast during January to March 1987\*. LUXEMBOURG Winter influx: five or six individuals in second half of February. SWITZERLAND Largest-ever influx: many records on Swiss Plateau during January to mid March 1987. (cf. influx into Belgium in January-February 1987, *Brit. Birds* 80: 323.)

**Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Aquila pomarina* GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC Population estimate: relatively stable at 80 pairs in 1985.

**Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga* FINLAND First record of form '*fulvescens*': Hanko on 5th October 1984 (see Tawny/Steppe Eagle below). GIBRALTAR First record: adult flying north on 10th March 1987.

**Tawny/Steppe Eagle** *Aquila rapax* FINLAND Deletion: record of one on 5th October 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 78: 640; 80: 324) now considered to refer to Spotted Eagle *A. clanga*. HUNGARY First record of the African race *belisarius*: adult at Földes from 13th July to 12th September 1986.

**Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos* HUNGARY First breeding record: pair bred in northern mountains in 1987.

**Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* SWITZERLAND Seventh record: light-phase at Chavornay on 19th April 1987.

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* DENMARK Highest-ever count: 95 migrants passing Hellebaek on 11th April 1987. GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC Population estimate: 120 pairs in 1985; 353 juveniles ringed during 1980-85.

**Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus* GIBRALTAR First-ever breeding: May 1987.

**Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* FRANCE Spring influx: at least 50 in the south and four to six along the Atlantic coast in 1987. MALTA Spring influx: usually only a few in late May, but hundreds reported on 29th May 1987.

**Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* NETHERLANDS First since 1923: Groningen during February-March 1987. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus* GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC Resumed breeding: no breeding records during 1975-80, but five pairs at new site in Harz Mountains in 1985. YUGOSLAVIA Resumed breeding: first breeding in Slovenia 'for some years'.

**Sora** *Porzana carolina* SWEDEN Second record: Skattkärr, Värmland, during 18th May to 25th June 1987 and possibly the same at Mora during 6th-7th July (first record was in 1986). (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* MALTA Sixth confirmed breeding record: first confirmed breeding in Gozo, in spring 1987 (cf. first Maltese breeding in 1984, *Brit. Birds* 77: 588).

**Purple Gallinule** *Porphyrio porphyrio* SPAIN Range expansion: small population in Jaén province, some 250 km from sites in Guadalquivir Marismas, with 'some nests' in May 1986 and 43 individuals in census in December 1986 (cf. high counts in Morocco, *Brit. Birds* 80: 324).

**Coot** *Fulica atra* MOROCCO High winter numbers: at Merja Zerga lagoon 70,000 on 22nd

September 1986, 30,200 on 20th December 1986 and 28,000 on 18th January 1987.

**Crane** *Grus grus* GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC Population increase: at least 1,000 pairs, perhaps 1,100. Passage: 24,000 at Rügen and Bock on 1st November 1985 and 41,000 in the country at that time.

**Painted Snipe** *Rostratula benghalensis* MOROCCO First record: adult female at Taliouine on 20th April 1987\*. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Cream-coloured Courser** *Cursorius cursor* NETHERLANDS Seventh record: Noordholland during 3rd-21st October 1986. PORTUGAL Second record: Carrapateira in the Western Algarve on 6th May 1987 (first was in north in 1928).

**Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola* DENMARK Seventh record: Vejlerne during 6th-21st June 1987, and possibly same individual at Skallingen on 23rd June 1987. SWEDEN Tenth record: Halmstad on 24th June 1987.

**Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* DENMARK Fourth record: Vejlerne during 20th-27th June 1987. FRANCE Eighth record: one in colony of Collared Pratincoles *G. pratincola* in Camargue during 31st May to 14th June 1987\*. SWEDEN Eleventh record: Hornborgasjön on 20th June 1987.

**Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferus* HUNGARY First record: near Almásfüzitő on several dates between 1st November and 30th December 1986. ROMANIA First record: Sacalin Island in Danube Delta on 8th September 1985.

**Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* SPAIN Correction: record on 29th September 1985 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 11) now rejected.

**Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus* CYPRUS Second record: headland north of Paphos Harbour during 15th-16th April 1987\* and again at Asprokremmos Dam on 20th April 1987\* (first was in August 1984, *Brit. Birds* 80: 11).

**American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* FRANCE Fourth record: adult in summer plumage during 5th-12th July 1987\*. NORWAY First record: male at Rogaland on 19th June 1985. SWEDEN Sixth to ninth records:

Morups Tånge on 17th June 1987\* and 19th-22nd July 1987\*, two at Getterön on 22nd July 1987\*, and one on 23rd-24th July 1987\*.

**Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* POLAND Fourth record: Turawa Reservoir near Opole on 9th October 1986. SWEDEN Third and fourth records: Ottenby on 15th May 1987, and Bläsinge on 3rd August 1987.

**American/Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica/P. fulva* FINLAND Correction: record in July 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 588; 80: 324) has not yet been accepted; accepted records of Pacific Golden Plover number six (not ten), others being assigned to *P. dominica/P. fulva*.

**White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* SWEDEN Fourth record: Halmstad on 12th-13th July 1987 (third was in June 1983, *Brit. Birds* 77: 588).

**Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* DENMARK Eighth record: Ølsemagle Revle during 22nd July to 2nd August 1987.

**Purple Sandpiper** *Calidris maritima* MOROCCO Sixth record: two at Ceuta on 24th December 1986.

**Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* DENMARK Highest numbers in recent years: many in July-August 1987 (e.g. 16 at Ølsemagle Revle, 18 at Saltbækning and 11 at Tipperne).

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* ITALY Eighth and ninth records: Sicily on 19th August 1985 and 13th October 1985.

**Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* ITALY Third breeding record: near Alessandria, Piedmont, in 1986.

**Pintail Snipe** *Gallinago stenura* ISRAEL First record: trapped at Eilat during November 1984. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* ITALY Third record: near Grosseto, Tuscany, on 26th September 1985.

**Dowitcher** *Limnodromus* POLAND Second record: Słońsk Reservoir on 3rd September 1986.

**Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* DENMARK Ninth record: Alrø on 20th July 1987. FINLAND Sixth breeding record: pair with fledglings in central Finland in 1987. (These reports are further evidence of range expansion and increasing vagrancy by this species, cf. *Brit. Birds* 80: 11.)

**Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria* SWEDEN First record: Gårdby, Öland, on 27th May 1987.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Increasingly frequent breeding: 1935, 1938, 1942, 1972, 1978 and, now, every year 1981-86.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Deletion: recent entry (*Brit. Birds* 80: 325) referred to Green Sandpiper *T. ochropus*).

**Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* DENMARK Tenth record: Aflandshage on 10th-11th July 1987 and probably same individual at Ølsemagle Revle on 12th July 1987. LATVIAN SSR First confirmed breeding: eggs hatched successfully in area where breeding has probably occurred since 1980.

**Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* DENMARK Fifth record: Vejle on 7th-8th June 1987. MOROCCO Fourth record: Oued Laaguig on 4th May 1987. SWEDEN Third record: Umeå on 16th May 1987.

**Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus* NORWAY Large invasion: many during October-November 1985 (e.g. 55 at Ørland on 28th October 1985) (cf. high numbers in Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden, *Brit. Birds* 79: 288, and in Britain and Ireland, *Brit. Birds* 80: 404-421).

**Great Black-headed Gull** *Larus ichthyaetus* CYPRUS Increased vagrancy: possibly five in Akrotiri Salt-lake/Phasouri Reed-bed area during March 1987 (previously only three records during past 29 years, but two since 1983) (cf. recent records in Greece and Spain, *Brit. Birds* 79: 288; 80: 325).

**Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* SPAIN Second and third records: second-winters at Pontevendra on 20th February 1980, and at Ebro Delta on 28th August 1986\*.

**Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* FRANCE Deletion: fifth record (*Brit. Birds* 80: 325) not

accepted. NORWAY Fourth record: adult male at Mølen, Vestfold, on 12th November 1985 (third was in November 1980, *Brit. Birds* 76: 568). SWEDEN Fifth and sixth records: Gräsgård, Öland, during 19th-25th April 1987, and Umeå on 17th May 1987 (fourth was in June 1985).

**Little Gull** *Larus minutus* GIBRALTAR Highest-ever count: 220 flying east on 24th January 1987.

**Sabine's Gull** *Larus sabini* MOROCCO Largest-ever flock: 17 together at Ceuta on 10th January 1985 is seventeenth record for Morocco and third for Strait of Gibraltar (cf. recent correspondence concerning records in Britain and Ireland in winter, *Brit. Birds* 80: 75-77, 332-333).

**Bonaparte's Gull** *Larus philadelphia* SPAIN First and second records: first-winter at Corme, La Coruña, on 1st November 1982, and adult at Laxe, La Coruña, on 8th February 1986\*.

**Audouin's Gull** *Larus audouinii* CYPRUS First confirmed breeding since 1974: 36 adults and 15 nests with eggs or chicks on Klidhes Islands on 24th May 1987. SPAIN Record numbers at Chafarinas Islands colony: following culling of Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus*, 2,845 nests counted and 1,000 young fledged in 1987.

**Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* SPAIN Fifth record: adult in Málaga on 18th-19th January 1986\*. SWEDEN Third record: Stenåsa, Öland, on 20th-21st July 1987.

**Iceland Gull** *Larus glaucoides* ITALY Third record: Comacchio valley during 8th-12th February 1986. MOROCCO Third record: first-year at Ceuta on 16th January 1987 (cf. first record for Gibraltar on 14th-15th January 1987, *Brit. Birds* 80: 325).

**Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus* MOROCCO Sixth and seventh records: first-winter at Salé on 7th March 1987 and second-winter at Larache on 28th March 1987 (fifth was in April 1986, *Brit. Birds* 80: 326). SWEDEN Highest-ever annual total: 85 in 1986 (following on record numbers in 1983, 1984 and 1985, *Brit. Birds* 79: 288; 80: 326).

**Ivory Gull** *Pagophila eburnea* NETHERLANDS First record: Schiermonnikoog on 9th February 1987.

**Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis* HUNGARY Fourth and fifth records: adults at Fehérgyarmat on 29th June 1986, and Balatonboglár on 7th August 1986.

**Roseate Tern** *Sterna dougallii* CANARY ISLANDS First breeding record: pair on El Hierro in 1987. NORWAY Second record: adult in Rogaland during 11th-12th July 1985 (first was in 1984, *Brit. Birds* 80: 12).

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo* ITALY Population increase: numbers up on 1986, with 20 colonies totalling 1,820 pairs in Commacchio valley in 1987.

**Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* NETHERLANDS First record: adult at Ritthem on 1st-2nd November 1986. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Bridled Tern** *Sterna anaethetus* DENMARK First record: Køge Havra during 16th-22nd July 1987.

**Sooty Tern** *Sterna fuscata* FRANCE Tenth record: adult in colony of Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis* at Arcachon in Gironde during 2nd May to 18th June 1987. SPAIN Fourth record: immature in La Coruña on 20th-21st June 1982\*.

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus* NORWAY Second record: adult at Mølen, Vestfold, on 16th May 1985 (first was in June 1980, *Brit. Birds* 75: 27).

**Guillemot** *Uria aalge* NORWAY Approaching extinction: colony at Hjelmsøystauran, Finnmark, down from 110,000 pairs in 1964 to 12,000 in 1985 and 2,000 pairs in 1987.

**Little Auk** *Alle alle* DENMARK High numbers: for third successive year; large numbers, based on counts from ships, 200,000-300,000 estimated in Skagerrak in January 1987.

**Rufous Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia orientalis* HUNGARY First record: juvenile at Szeged on 18th December 1985.

**Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis* ITALY Second record: Sicily on 17th November 1985. MOROCCO Fourth and fifth records: Méknès on 2nd April 1987, and Ouarzazate on 24th April 1987.

**Eagle Owl** *Bubo bubo* GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC Population estimate: about 60 pairs in 1985.

**Snowy Owl** *Nyctea scandiaca* FINLAND Breeding influx: 30 occupied territories in Lapland in 1987 (previous breeding years were 1974 and 1932).

**Pygmy Owl** *Glaucidium passerinum* GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC Population estimate: at least 100 pairs in 1985.

**Little Owl** *Athene noctua* GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC Population estimate: about 150 pairs in 1985, but decreasing in north.

**Ural Owl** *Strix uralensis* CZECHOSLOVAKIA First breeding in Moravia: breeding in primeval forest in Moravskoslezské Beskydy Mountains in 1983 (breeding usually confined to eastern Slovakia, with a few observations in southern Bohemia).

**Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus* SWITZERLAND First record: colony discovered at Locarno in 1987 (cf. northern range extension in Yugoslavia, *Brit. Birds* 80: 13).

**Alpine Swift** *Apus melba* SWEDEN Sixth record: Sundre, Gotland, on 18th May 1987 (fifth was in June 1984, *Brit. Birds* 79: 289).

**White-breasted Kingfisher** *Halcyon smyrnensis* CYPRUS Wintering: nine sightings at Phasouri Reservoir between 25th January and 1st May 1987. GREECE Third record: found dead in garden pond on Chios on 22nd March 1987.

**Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis* GREECE Fifth record: single on several dates in port of Chios during winter 1986/87. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Green Woodpecker** *Picus viridis* SPAIN First known breeding at Strait of Gibraltar: two sites found in May/June. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Syrian Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos syriacus* POLAND Range extension: widespread in east and south now extended north to reach Baltic coast around Gdańsk Bay in 1986 (cf. range expansion elsewhere, *Brit. Birds* 77: 238).

**Calandra Lark** *Melanocorypha calandra* NORWAY Seventh record: Utsira, Rogaland, on 24th May 1985.

**Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* POLAND Second record: Przegalina near Gdańsk on 1st November 1986.

**Oriental Skylark** *Alauda gulgula* ISRAEL Increased occurrence: seven to 15 have wintered at Eilat every year since the first record in 1984. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Shore Lark** *Eremophila alpestris* LUXEMBOURG First record: two flocks (one of 18, one of 25-30) in second half of February 1987.

**Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* FRANCE Spring influx: about 40 along Mediterranean coast (including Corsica)\* and at least seven along the Atlantic coast between 25th April and 17th May 1987\*. SPAIN High numbers: best spring for many years at Strait of Gibraltar. SWITZERLAND Tenth record: near Ascona on 23rd May 1987 (ninth was in April 1986, *Brit. Birds* 80: 326).

**Richard's Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* MOROCCO Eighth record: two near Taroudant on 26th March 1987 (seventh concerned two in December 1984, *Brit. Birds* 78: 643). POLAND Autumn influx: eight records during 10th-26th September 1986 (total is now 22).

**Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* POLAND First spring record: Gdańsk-Górki Wschodnie on 27th April 1985 (also two in autumn 1986).

**Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* CYPRUS Vagrant: male at Akrotiri Salt-lake on 27th April 1987\*. DENMARK Fourth and fifth records: male for several weeks in Sønderjylland during summer 1987, and first-winter trapped at Christiansø on 8th-9th August 1987. FINLAND Fifth record of hybrid breeding: female paired with Yellow Wagtail *M. flava* in May-June 1987, but nest with five eggs destroyed by flooding\*. FRANCE First record: male at Leucate, Aude, during 6th-10th April 1987\*. POLAND High annual total: six records during 1986 (three in spring and three in autumn) take total to 18. YUGOSLAVIA First record: male at Sečovlje on 26th April 1987.

**Grey Hypocolius** *Hypocolius ampelinus* ISRAEL First record: adult female trapped at Eilat during March 1987. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Black Bush Robin** *Cercotrichas podobe* ISRAEL About tenth record: two trapped at Eilat during March-April 1987. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus* SWEDEN Ninth record: trapped at Svenska Högarna on 27th May 1987 (seventh was in September 1985 and eighth in May 1986, *Brit. Birds* 79: 290; 80: 13).

**White-throated Robin** *Irania gutturalis* FRANCE First record: two in Camargue on 17th April 1987\*. NETHERLANDS First record: Maasland on 3rd-4th November 1986. (Cf. records in Norway in 1981, Sweden in 1981 and 1986, and Britain in 1983, *Brit. Birds* 76: 569; 77: 589; 80: 131.)

**Black-eared Wheatear** *Oenanthe hispanica* SWEDEN Second record: Ronneby on 6th June 1986.

**Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris* DENMARK Range expansion: spreading from northwest to southeast at Bornholm and Zeeland in recent years (cf. range expansion elsewhere in Europe, *Brit. Birds* 76: 275). GIBRALTAR First and second records: two on 24th February 1987 and one on 5th March 1987. MOROCCO Ninth record: El Jadida on 8th February 1987 (eighth was in January 1984, *Brit. Birds* 78: 643).

**Cetti's Warbler** *Cettia cetti* FRANCE Population crash: almost disappeared from Camargue after severe 1986/87 winter.

**Fan-tailed Warbler** *Cisticola juncidis* FRANCE Population crash: almost extinct in France after severe winter 1986/87 (following huge decrease in winter 1984/85, *Brit. Birds* 78: 643).

**Lanceolated Warbler** *Locustella lanceolata* FRANCE Second record: found dead on Ouesant on 11th September 1986. NORWAY Second record: juvenile male died on ship 128 km north of Bear Island, Arctic Ocean, in mid September 1982.

**Savi's Warbler** *Locustella luscinioides* FINLAND Fifth record: singing male at Virolahti dur-

ing 30th April to 3rd May 1986 (first to fourth records were in 1984 and 1985, *Brit. Birds* 77: 590; 79: 290).

**Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* DENMARK First record: trapped at Christiansø on 6th September 1987. FINLAND Fifth and sixth records: Lågskär on 5th June 1987\* and Riappaluoto on 8th June 1987\* (all four previous records have been in summer, during 1980-84, *Brit. Birds* 77: 590). NETHERLANDS Fourth record: Vlieland on 26th September 1986.

**Booted Warbler** *Hippolais caligata* FINLAND Fourth and fifth records: singing males in Oulu during 1st-6th July 1987\* and in Rautjärvi at end June 1987\* (first to third records also concerned singing males, in 1981, 1984 and 1986, *Brit. Birds* 80: 14). NETHERLANDS Second record: Almere on 11th October 1986.

**Marmora's Warbler** *Sylvia sarda* FRANCE Second mainland record: female near Nice on 31st March 1987\*. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* DENMARK Seventh and eighth records: male trapped at Klitmøller on 29th April 1987, and female trapped at Christiansø on 11th June 1987. FINLAND Tenth record: male at Jurno on 3rd June 1987 (ninth was in May 1986, *Brit. Birds* 80: 14). SWEDEN Fourteenth and fifteenth records: singing male in Öland during 7th-9th May 1986, and single at Falsterbo on 18th May 1986.

**Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* FINLAND First record: female at Utö on 4th May 1986 (cf. third Swiss record in March-April 1986, *Brit. Birds* 80: 328).

**Desert Warbler** *Sylvia nana* ISRAEL Influx: 40 between Eilat and Yotvata during winter 1986/87. SWEDEN Correction: record in May 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 572; 80: 328) is accepted.

**Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis* POLAND First record: immature caught at Chafupy on Hel Peninsula on 11th September 1986.

**Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* NETHERLANDS Third and fourth records: Vlieland during 5th-9th October 1986, and at Bloemendaal on 9th November 1986 (second was in 1985, *Brit. Birds* 79: 290).

**Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* DENMARK Sixth record: trapped at Christiansø on 24th August 1987.

**Bearded Tit** *Panurus biarmicus* MOROCCO Second record: female at mouth of River Massa on 8th April 1987\*.

**Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea* SPAIN First known breeding at Strait of Gibraltar: sites found in two areas in April/May.

**Alpine Chough** *Pyrrhocorax graculus* CYPRUS First record: two in Kyrenia Mountains on 11th April 1987\*. GIBRALTAR Second and third records: one flying south on 15th April 1987\*, and seven flying north on 28th April 1987\*.

**Daurian Starling** *Sturnus sturninus* NORWAY First record: juvenile male shot at Lillestrøm near Oslo on 29th September 1985 (cf. record on Fair Isle, Shetland, in May 1985\*, *Brit. Birds* 78: 416).

**Spanish Sparrow** *Passer hispaniolensis* FRANCE Second mainland record: Camargue during mid June 1987\*.

**Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus* GIBRALTAR Eighth record: 22nd February 1987.

**Red-fronted Serin** *Serinus pusillus* GREECE Second record: several flocks of five to ten individuals on Chios during January and February 1987. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Redpoll** *Carduelis flammea* DENMARK Large spring numbers: following influx in autumn 1986, 3,100 migrating at Gilleleje on 11th March 1987. LUXEMBOURG Winter influx: large flocks from mid November 1986, with several hundred moving west on 15th and flocks of up to 30 to mid January 1987.

**Arctic Redpoll** *Carduelis hornemanni* FRANCE Fourth and fifth twentieth-century records: on Ouessant during 26th-28th October 1985 and 19th-21st October 1986.

**Two-barred Crossbill** *Loxia leucoptera* FINLAND Widespread breeding: 'good numbers' holding territory in spring and 'hundreds of fledglings flocking in summer' in east and north in 1987.





**Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra* NORWAY Influx: many in east during June-July 1987.

**Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes githagineus* SPAIN Possible range expansion: adult male trapped at Málaga on 21st February 1984 (200 km west of breeding area in Almería), and male and two females at Sierra de Cartagena on 2nd February 1986 (130 km east of breeding area).

**Scarlet Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus* DENMARK Highest-ever spring numbers: many (e.g. 122 passed through Skagen in one hour on 24th May 1987). GREECE First record: several on Chios during October 1986 to March 1987.

**Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* DENMARK High spring numbers: 349 ringed at Christiansø in 1987, compared with 12-30 in previous springs; best day was 8th April 1987, with 213 ringed and total of 400-500 roosting.

**Snow Bunting** *Plectrophenax nivalis* LUXEMBOURG Third record: single on 26th January.

**Black-faced Bunting** *Emberiza spodocephala* NETHERLANDS First record: first-year male trapped at Westenschouwen on 16th November 1986 (the first reported in 'European news' since those on Heligoland, FRG, in May 1980, and in Finland in November 1981, *Brit. Birds* 75: 271; 77: 591).

**Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalos* GIBRALTAR First record: male and female on 2nd May 1987, following strong easterly winds.

**Rock Bunting** *Emberiza cia* POLAND Fourth



**6 & 7.** Male Siberian Meadow Bunting *Emberiza cioides*, Finland, May 1987 (Ari Rivasto)

record: male at Nowa Morawa in Sudety Mountains on 9th August 1986 (third was in April 1985, *Brit. Birds* 79: 292).

**Siberian Meadow Bunting** *Emberiza cioides* FINLAND First record: singing male trapped at Utö during 20th-27th May 1987 (plates 6 & 7).

**Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* FINLAND Largest-ever breeding numbers: 'hundreds of pairs' in north in 1987.

**Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephala* DENMARK Fourth record: Skagen on 22nd May 1987 (cf. Swedish and Finnish records, mostly in May, in recent years, *Brit. Birds* 77: 591; 78: 345).

**Indigo Bunting** *Passerina cyanea* DENMARK First record: second-year male trapped at Christiansø on 5th August 1987 (origin questioned).

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- No information was received from Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Estonian SSR, the Faroe Islands, the Federal Republic of Germany, or Iceland.

## Mystery photographs

**127** Gull-watching has been one of the growth areas of recent years (though there remain intriguing regional variations in the enthusiasm with which it is pursued). Among the target species in winter, both along the coast and at inland reservoirs and refuse tips, are two so-called 'white-winged' gulls from the Arctic: Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus* and Iceland Gull *L. glaucoides*. The appearance of the mystery gull instantly suggests one of this pair of very similarly plumaged species. When dealing with 'white-winged' gulls, however, three points should always be borne in mind: first, at a certain stage in the wing-moult when the outer primaries are growing, Herring Gulls *L. argentatus* (particularly of the rather darker mantled Scandinavian race *argentatus*) may show very little black in the



wingtip; secondly, albinistic and leucistic Herring Gulls (and even Common Gulls *L. canus*) are not infrequently misidentified as Glaucous or Iceland; thirdly, hybrids between Glaucous Gull and Herring Gull, almost certainly from Iceland, occur quite regularly in Britain. Avoidance of these pitfalls depends upon a thorough examination of plumage (including shade of upperparts as well as the patterns of the flight feathers), bare-parts coloration (including consideration of whether bill pattern matches the apparent age of the individual), and size and structure. The last is also the key to distinguishing between genuine Glaucous and Iceland, though in first-years and second-years the bill pattern also provides important clues (put simplistically, the bill of Iceland has, age for age, a much more extensive dark tip and generally a duller base).

The mystery gull is firmly anchored to its perch, but, even at rest, the general pallor of its plumage and the prominent clear whitish wedge formed by the folded primaries indicate a plumage totally compatible with both Glaucous and Iceland. What structural clues are there? Even allowing for perspective and 'size-illusion', comparison suggests that the mystery gull is less bulky and more finely proportioned than the partly obscured Herring Gull to the rear. The head lacks angularity, with an even curve from the forehead to the nape, while the bill is of unexceptional length (a little less than half the head length) and has neither a pronounced hooked tip nor a prominent gonys. In conjunction with the rounded eye and lack of eyebrow furrow, this produces a decidedly gentle, unassuming demeanour. The wing-point is manifestly long, and extends beyond the tip of the tail by an amount exceeding the length of the bill. These well-developed characters leave no doubt that the mystery bird is an Iceland Gull; it was photographed by Arnoud B. van den Berg in the Netherlands in May 1983.

Glaucous Gull, by comparison, is one of the most robust gulls, typically between a large Herring Gull and a Great Black-back *L. marinus* in size, and exhibiting a rather angular head, powerful bill, relatively short wing-point (typically extending beyond the tail by an amount less than the bill length) and generally aggressive demeanour. As with most of the larger species of gull, there is considerable size variation between individuals and not all Glaucous conform to this image. During the early to mid winter period, first-winter individuals tend to have a longer primary projection than older ones, and the occasional less robust Glaucous may

at first (or second) glance be little different from a larger example of Iceland Gull; in such cases bill size and shape provides the best character.

What age is this Iceland Gull? It has a pale iris and some pale grey above, so is at least a second-year. Black-and-white reproduction denies information on the genuine extent or intensity of white, buff and grey, but the plumage appears generally off-white and the mantle and scapulars suffused with pale grey; the coverts appear to lack grey, however, and are weakly and diffusely mottled. These characters and the complete dark tip to the bill (with no pale nail) indicate that this is a second-summer individual. A third-year would look more adult-like, with some grey on the wings and more advanced bill colour.

A. R. DEAN

9. Mystery photograph 128. Identify the species. Answer next month.



# PhotoSpot

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## 24. Parrot Crossbill

A bird of the Northwest Palearctic, the Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* breeds regularly, but relatively sparsely, from Scandinavia eastwards to Northern Russia, and sporadically south to Poland and the German Democratic Republic. As a specialist feeder, the highest densities tend to occur in areas where there is a good crop of pine seeds, their preferred food. Since the fruiting of pines *Pinus* is generally more reliable than, for example, the spruces *Picea* favoured by Crossbills *L. curvirostra*, Parrot Crossbills are rather more sedentary, and only erratically eruptive.



10. Male Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*, Norfolk, April 1985 (D. M. Cottridge)

The Parrot Crossbill is a scarce vagrant to Britain, with 227 accepted records to date, chiefly as a result of major influxes in 1962/63 and 1982/83, when at least 189 individuals were recorded. The occurrence of Parrot Crossbills in Britain was discussed recently by Catley & Hursthouse (*Brit. Birds* 78: 482-505).

Following the 1982/83 invasion, two pairs attempted to breed in Northern England in 1983. The following year, a pair bred successfully at Holkham Meals in Norfolk, and probably also in Suffolk. Having missed the opportunity to photograph the Norfolk birds in 1984, DMC was grateful to be given a second chance when Parrot Crossbills returned to the same spot to breed again in 1985.

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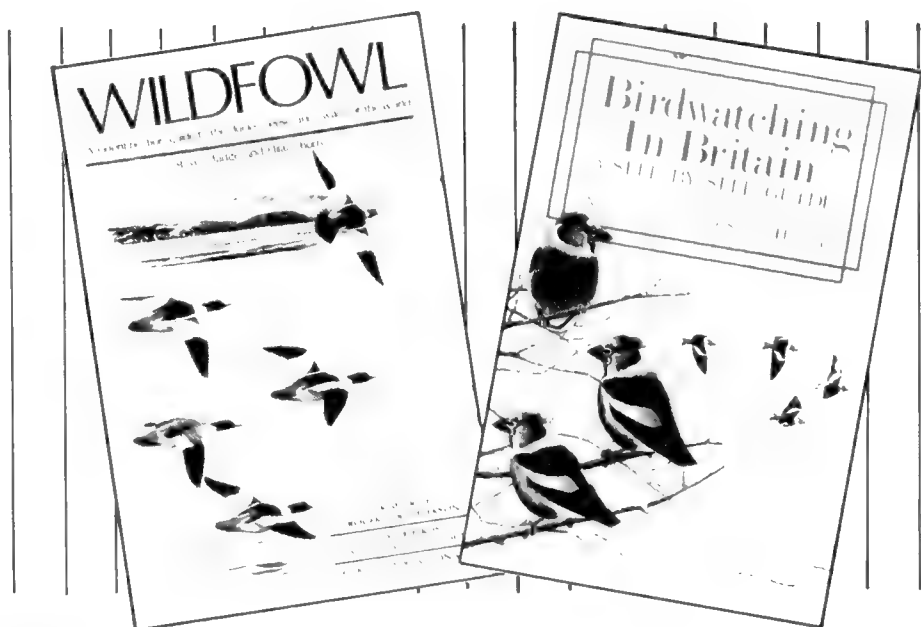
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11. Female Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*, Norfolk, April 1985 (D. M. Cottridge)

12. Juvenile Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*, Norfolk, April 1985 (D. M. Cottridge)



The field identification of Parrot Crossbills is often difficult, but plates 12-13 clearly show several points: (1) the bulky and robust build, which on measurements averages larger and heavier than Crossbill; (2) the flattened forehead and crown, which may appear to run almost in a line with the massive bill; (3) the duller, rather greyish plumage tone of head, neck, nape and mantle; and (4) the pale ivory cutting edges of both mandibles (particularly noticeable on the juvenile, plate 12). More especially, they give an excellent impression of the size and structure of the species' bill, which to date remains the most useful single identification feature.

DAVID COTTRIDGE and CHRIS KIGHTLEY

## Notes



**Woodpigeons nesting on sea cliffs and inside buildings** Woodpigeons *Columba palumbus* usually nest on trees, in bushes, hedges, thickets or among creepers, and occasionally on the ground or on ledges of buildings (*BWP* vol. 4). An exceptional nest site was on an offshore lighthouse in Buchan, east Aberdeenshire, Grampian (*Brit. Birds* 64: 194-195). I have since located three further atypical nesting sites in Buchan. On 30th June 1979, I flushed an adult Woodpigeon from a sea cliff near Whinnyfold and, on investigation, found a nest containing two warm eggs; this was situated on a small ledge about two-thirds the way up the 25-m cliff. Many Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* and Guillemots *Uria aalge* were nesting on the cliff and there were also a few scattered pairs of Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis*, one of which was incubating an egg about 0.5m below the Woodpigeon's nest. On 30th June 1980, a fresh nest with a few flecks of down was found on the same ledge. The site was not visited in 1981 or 1982, but on 7th July 1983, on the same ledge, I found a nest containing two young Woodpigeons about 14 days old; on the same day, about 0.5km away, an adult Woodpigeon was flushed from a cliff, but the site was inaccessible.

Two other nests were inside buildings on derelict farms. On 2nd July 1985, near Ellon, I disturbed a Woodpigeon from within a steading and found a nest containing two well-grown young, about 4m above the ground on a plank of wood lying across the rafters; on 10th July, both young were fledged and still in the steading. On 8th August 1985, near Peterhead, I found a nest containing one warm egg about 5m up on a ledge on a gable wall inside a barn; on 27th August, it contained one dead young Woodpigeon about one-quarter grown. Both buildings had large, permanently open doors near the nests.

The nearest normal sites (e.g. trees, etc.) to the Whinnyfold nest were 0.8km away, from the Ellon nest 1km, and from the Peterhead nest 0.3km.

In Buchan, intensive agriculture over huge areas has resulted in localised scarcity of trees and bushes. This, combined with the rich feeding available, was the likely reason for these atypical nesting sites being used. It is perhaps of interest that Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto* have recently been noted nesting successfully inside a barn (*Brit. Birds* 78: 664).

GRAHAM W. REBECCA

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**Pallid Swifts nesting in palms** The nesting of Pallid Swifts *Apus pallidus* in palms (*Brit. Birds* 77: 568) is not unknown in southern Spain. Since 1981, one or two pairs have nested, or attempted to nest, in a date palm *Phoenix dactylifera* outside my home in Torremolinos; and in the centre of Málaga, which holds a high population of this species, I have regularly seen them flying up and into palms in a manner suggesting attempted breeding. My casual observations from Torremolinos indicate that the swifts may be inhibited from using palms more extensively by the intense competition from House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* for the same sites. It also seems possible that they will resort to palms when there is a lack of suitable sites either on the fringes of a large breeding population or within the centre of a large population: the Torremolinos swifts would fall into the first category and the Málaga ones into the second.

ANDREW M. PATERSON

Edificio San Gabriel 2-<sup>o</sup>-A, c/ Escritor Adolfo Reyes,  
29620 Torremolinos (Málaga), Spain

**Pallid Swifts nesting in palms** Nesting in palm trees is very probably regular behaviour for Pallid Swifts in the avenues of Casablanca, Morocco. On 5th June 1979 and on 10th June 1984, as I drove slowly around in the centre of this town, I observed, on several avenues, nests of Pallid Swifts 4-5 m above the ground in palms, just above the leaf-line. Throughout my observations (a few minutes), adults continuously left and returned to the nests. In Morocco, Pallid Swifts are common and regular nesters in cornices of buildings. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Swifts *A. apus* are fairly rare breeders in most towns in the country. This is especially true in Casablanca and in Rabat, the largest city in the vicinity of Casablanca, where they thus cannot compete with Pallid Swifts for palm-tree sites (according to Lack, 1956, *Swifts in a Tower*, Swifts occasionally nest in trees).

J. FRANCHIMONT

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**Yellow Wagtails roosting in wheatfield** Between 11th and 31st August 1983, at Everton, Bedfordshire, during a period of warm, dry weather, up to 42 Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava* roosted in a field of wheat. They always flew in from the south, between 30 and 50 minutes after sunset, and dropped straight into the ripe standing corn, momentarily pausing on the wheat heads before going to the ground; most of them called in flight and sometimes on the ground. Their numbers increased from five, to 19 on 15th, and 42 on 17th August. During the evening of 18th, the wheat was being cut by combine-harvester, but about 12 wagtails nevertheless flew into the

straw rows and moved about restlessly in front of the combine before settling in the uncut corn. On 19th, after the entire field had been cut, 30 Yellow Wagtails roosted in the straw rows, and some chased insects in the stubble. On 30th August, when 12-15 wagtails were still roosting at the site, the straw and stubble were burnt except for a 15-m peripheral firebreak; that evening, only a few wagtails came in and these fed in burnt patches at the edge of the field. None was seen after 31st August.

I can find no mention in the literature of Yellow Wagtails using this habitat for roosting, although they do, of course, commonly use reedbeds. Yellow Wagtails have also been known to roost in rough pasture, and in willows *Salix* beside a railway track (Stuart Smith, 1950, *The Yellow Wagtail*).

ANTHONY H. CHAPMAN

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**'BWP' vol. V** Oxford University Press has just informed us that the publication of the fifth volume of *Birds of the Western Palearctic* has again been delayed, this time probably until April. The special offers noted in September (*Brit. Birds* 80: 439) are still available (exclusively to *British Birds* subscribers), and will be extended accordingly.

**'Birds of Africa' vol. 3** The third in this six-volume work is due for publication in June 1988. It will cover parrots, turacos, cuckoos, owls, nightjars, swifts, mousebirds, kingfishers, bee-eaters, woodpeckers, and related groups. The full price will be £71.50, but you can order your copy now for £60.00, saving £11.50. The full price of the first three volumes will be £214.50, but they can be ordered now for £180.00, saving £34.50.

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The rules are largely unchanged from previous years:

Up to three colour transparencies, each taken during 1987, may be submitted by each photographer. Transparencies should *not* be glass-mounted. They will be judged not only on technical excellence, but also on originality, scientific interest, aesthetic appeal and artistic composition. Preference will be given to photographs taken in Britain and Ireland, but those of species on the British list taken anywhere in the world are also eligible. Photographs must not have been submitted for publication elsewhere (though, of course, the copyright remains with the photographer and use subsequent to publication in *British Birds* is unrestricted). The photographs by winner and runners-up may be used at the discretion of the judges in promoting *British Birds* or the competition. A brief account (not more than 200 words) should be enclosed with each, giving the circumstances in which obtained, the method used, technical details (focal length of lens and make of camera and film), locality, date and photographer's name and address. Transparencies will be returned only if accompanied by a suitable SAE. Entries are accepted only on the above conditions.

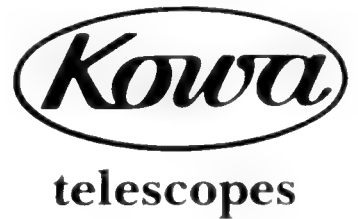
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The 1988 awards (cheque for £100 and engraved salver for the winner, cheques for £40 and £25 for the second and third and £25-worth of Collins books and £25-worth of Christopher Helm books for each of the top three photographers) will be presented at a Press Reception in London in May or June. The runners-up will be welcome to attend the award presentation.

The closing date for entries is 30th January 1988. Transparencies should be clearly marked 'Bird Photograph of the Year' and sent to the editorial office at Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

**Bird Illustrator of the Year** We are delighted that, as already announced (*Brit. Birds* 80: 443), this year's competition will be sponsored by *Kowa* telescopes.



Amateur and professional artists are invited to submit four line-drawings suitable for reproduction in *British Birds* (pen-and-ink or scraperboard, but not pencil or wash). The subjects should be birds recorded in the West Palearctic (Europe, North Africa and the Middle East). Exact size is important: drawings should be the following sizes (width  $\times$  depth in cm): (a)  $18.6 \times 20.8$ , (b)  $16.35 \times 6.9$  and (c)  $8.1 \times 6.0$ , for publication at two-thirds of those dimensions (the largest drawing (a) may, if preferred, be submitted at  $24.8 \times 27.75$ , for publication at half-size). Each set of four drawings must include at least one each of a, b and c. Entries will be judged as sets. Drawings based on published photographs or drawings are ineligible. The announcements of the previous winners (*Brit. Birds* 72: 403-409; 73: 380-384; 74: 275-278; 75: 304-308; 76: 288-291; 77: 283-288; 78: 317-322; 79: 319-325; 80: 351-361) included suggestions intended to help future entrants. Entries need not be mounted, but should have a generous 'handling margin' around each drawing.

The judging panel will consist of Robert Gillmor, Keith Shackleton and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock.

The winner will receive £100, the choice of a *Kowa* TSN-1 or TSN-2 telescope and an inscribed salver; the second-placed artist £40 and a *Kowa* telescope with zoom lens; and the third-placed artist £25 and a *Kowa* telescope with 20 $\times$  eyepiece. All three artists will also be invited to attend the award presentation at a Press Reception in July at The Mall Galleries in London, where a selection of the drawings will be on display. All artists whose work is displayed will also be welcome to attend the reception, which in previous years has provided a very happy occasion for meeting many of our top bird artists. The winners' entries will also be displayed in the annual exhibition of the Society of Wildlife Artists at The Mall Galleries. Previous winners have been Crispin Fisher (1979), Norman Arlott (1980 & 1981), Alan Harris (1982), Martin Woodcock (1983), Bruce Pearson (1984), Ian Lewington (1985), Chris Rose (1986) and David Quinn (1987).

It is one of the main aims of this *British Birds* competition to encourage and advance the careers of bird artists. The Editorial Board and the competition's judges are delighted to note that the winners in past years are now all highly successful freelance artists or otherwise employed in posts associated with wildlife.

Entries will remain the copyright of the artists, but are accepted on the understanding that they may be reproduced free in, or on the cover of, or for the promotion of *British Birds*. If accompanied by a suitable stamped addressed envelope, all drawings will be returned to the artists, but any selected for possible use by *British Birds* may be retained for up to 12 months after the award presentation. Each drawing must be marked clearly on the back with the artist's name and address (and date of birth if aged under 21, see 'The Richard Richardson Award', below), the identity of the species, and any other relevant information about the illustration.

The closing date will be 14th March 1988; the set of four drawings should be sent to 'Bird Illustrator of the Year', Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

**The Richard Richardson Award** To encourage young, up-and-coming bird artists, a special award (a cheque and a book to the total value of £60) will be presented for the best work submitted for the 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' competition (see above) by an artist aged under 21 years on 14th March 1988. The winner's entries will be displayed in the annual exhibition of the Society of Wildlife Artists at The Mall Galleries. This award is in memory of the famous Norfolk ornithologist and bird-artist, the late R. A. Richardson. The rules for entry are exactly the same as for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and entries by persons under 21 will automatically be considered for both awards.



**The PJC Award** A handsome trophy, the PJC Award, is presented annually, in memory of the late Pauline Jean Cook, to the artist whose single drawing submitted for the 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' competition is selected by the judges for its individual merit. The holder of the PJC Award also receives an inscribed book as a permanent symbol of the achievement. The current holder is J. S. Lyes (*Brit. Birds* 80: 250-251, 358-359, 588).

**Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs** The closing date for submission of prints for the twenty-eighth annual selection is 30th January 1988. Photographers may submit as many black-and-white prints as they wish.

The following details should be written on the back of each print: photographer's name and address, species, county (or country, if taken abroad), month, year, and technical details, such as make and size of camera, make and focal length of lens, type of film material, exposure and approximate distance from the subject. Prints will be retained in the editorial office as part of the reference collection and for possible use in the journal unless a request for return is noted on the back of each print and a suitable stamped addressed envelope is supplied.

Entries should be addressed to 'Best recent work', Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

## Reviews

**The Changing Countryside.** Edited by John Blunden and Nigel Curry. Christopher Helm, London, 1985. 269 pages; 14 colour plates; 46 black-and-white plates; 18 line-drawings. Paperback, £11.95.

**The Countryside Handbook.** Edited by Alan Rogers, John Blunden and Nigel Curry. Christopher Helm, London, 1985. 98 pages. Paperback, £5.95.

These are complementary volumes, produced by the Open University in association with the Countryside Commission. The *Handbook* is simply a directory and reference to legislation, publications and voluntary and official bodies concerned with the countryside. As such, it is a useful volume, whether or not one agrees with the comments provided on each entry.

The main book, *The Changing Countryside*, was a disappointment. Much of it comprises a tedious account of bureaucratic history and procedures, which needed summarising. And why should material for such a book avoid objective analysis (see p. 20)? The material seemed intensively selective, so the book misses many opportunities. Thus, the extent to which modern agriculture has reversed the effects of the depression of 1885-1939 is not discussed, although, as noted in the author's note on further reading, this needs thorough examination, as do the true impacts of the depression on landscape and wildlife habitats, a subject hardly recognised today. Understanding these points seems essential to any discussion of present events or future action. Nor do the authors even mention the major changes in geographic distribution of farm enterprises, and therefore habitats, although regional changes in the structure of the countryside have been much more intense than the national ones, an important point when neither

landscape, human population nor wildlife is uniformly distributed. Such regional changes also seem important in their themes of rural needs.

Sadly, the conservation section avoids any real discussion of the impact of farm technology and management on landscapes and wildlife. Yet, when habitat change is increasingly resisted, this must emerge as the strongest influence farming has on wildlife, a point at least recognised by one invited contributor. Here it might be stressed that organic farming is well established in British agriculture, but it works today because its products have scarcity value. Will it be viable if all farmers do it? Discussion of the economics involved here would have been far more useful than the subjective personal views provided.

The book rightly doubts the efficiency of modern agriculture, but misses the fundamental basis of that doubt—that much of the labour shed directly from farming supports it indirectly in greatly increased ancillary industries, so remaining in food production. Such industries include many small businesses dependent on local agricultural prosperity. When agriculture declines or, perhaps more likely, is deliberately contracted, will this affect such rural employment and rural communities? When rural employment is sustained by bureaucratic artifice, is it sensible to undermine existing sources? Such points needed adequate examination. And why advocate shifting from arable farming to livestock and grassland (p. 154) when health authorities urge us to eat fewer livestock products? Such campaigns have been successful in reducing consumption, hence dairy quotas which severely restrict the opportunities for arable farmers to change. Nor is it true that modern grassland management is necessarily more beneficial to wildlife than modern arable farming. But little is said of the opportunities to make better use of farming, to widen the range of crops arable farmers grow or the uses, particularly industrial, to which we put the crops. This subject is an important research area in Europe today, and crop diversity is already visibly changing in England. What effects will this have on landscape (not everyone loves oil-seed rape!) or wildlife?

This book has far too narrow a vision to achieve its declared objective of enabling its readers to 'indulge in meaningful debate' on its subject.

MICHAEL SHRUBB

**Statistics for Ornithologists.** By Jim Fowler and Louis Cohen. BTO Guide 22. British Trust for Ornithology, Tring, 1986. 176 pages. Paperback £10.00.

Only 20-30 years ago, statistics were rarely seen in ornithological journals. Now they are commonplace, if still baffling to some readers. While most professional ornithologists writing papers today were probably taught statistics, few of the many amateurs in Britain carrying out valuable studies and wanting to write up their results have that knowledge. In order to raise the ornithological understanding of statistics and, especially, to help the amateurs choose and use the appropriate statistical tests, the BTO has produced this guide.

The 'non-statistically inclined, but possibly interested' reader of this review should know that the book covers the subject very thoroughly, but may wish to skip the rest of this paragraph. The 'already at least partially knowledgeable' reader will want to know that several introductory chapters explain the basic concepts of statistics, including populations, sampling, means, medians, probabilities, and data transformation; also, very usefully, presentation of data. Then follow chapters on the principal statistical tests (e.g. association using chi-squared), contingency tables, correlations, product moment, regression, measuring differences, differences between means, and analysis of variance. Both parametric and non-parametric tests are described as appropriate.

So what does this guide offer ornithologists which other available guides to statistics for biologists do not? For a start, ornithological data are used in the examples. Instead of the inevitable tomato plants, differently coloured flowers, or numbers of mice, here are weights and measurement of Dunlins and Robins, and observations of tits at bird tables or in different habitats. This use of 'familiar' data may ease the learning process for would-be ornithological statisticians.

More importantly, the basis and use of statistics are explained in more detail, while the very useful cautions and restrictions on applying each test are fuller and clearer than any I have previously read. There are, however, two areas where I feel the authors could have been even more helpful. First, in guiding potential users to the test they might require, and, secondly, in giving guidance in the correct design of studies.

In their Preface (but who reads this other than reviewers?), the authors rightly recommend



that the book be read through from the beginning. Whilst that is undoubtedly the correct approach for a student, I cannot help feeling that, clear though the introductory chapters are, a more direct key to the different tests might have helped potential users without the necessary time, or perhaps patience, to find the most appropriate test for their data.

Chapter 1 states: 'A programme of fieldwork should be planned anticipating the statistical methods that are appropriate to the eventual analysis of the data. Attaching some statistical treatment as an afterthought to make the study seem more "respectable" is unlikely to be convincing.' In view of this admirably clear statement, it is disappointing that the authors did not follow it with any detailed guidance to the potential user, merely suggesting another book on this admittedly large subject.

These fairly small criticisms apart, this is a worthy addition to the long line of BTO guides, and one that I can strongly recommend.

M. A. OGILVIE

**Observers Birds, 50th Anniversary Edition. By Rob Hume.** Frederick Warne, London, 1987. 192 pages; 171 colour illustrations. Paperback, £3.50.

Although I was 'raised' on the Rev. C. A. Johns' *British Birds in their Haunts*, the first bird book I owned was *The Observer's Book of Birds*. It went everywhere with me, in my hip pocket, and I wore out (eventually, for it was a durable little publication) two copies.

Now we have a completely new, golden jubilee, edition by Rob Hume, and, for this reviewer, comparisons with the earlier version are inevitable.

To take the credit side first, the new text is so much more informative that it exposes, I fear, the inadequacy of its much-loved forerunner. Let the following compared examples speak for themselves.

REDSTART, 1937 'Haunt'

'Not very definite, usually near trees.'

REDSTART, 1987 'Habitat'

'Deciduous woods and parks with old trees, especially oak; also bushy woodland edges on hillsides and rocky slopes with scattered trees.'

REED WARBLER, 1937 'Notes'

'The song is a warble containing some of the harsh notes of the Sedge Warbler but lacking the volume and exuberance of that bird. There is also a scolding "churr".'

REED WARBLER, 1987 'Voice'

'Includes a low "churr". The song is rather low, rambling, with each phrase repeated two or three times to give a distinctive rhythm of churring, squeaky and chirping notes, and lacking the Sedge Warbler's vehemence—*chrr chrr trik trik trik chirup chirup* etc.'

In addition to body length, weights are now provided and, as is appropriate in 1987, both are in metric. Particularly satisfying is the fact that all (instead of half) the plates are in colour, including five additional ones by Robert Gillmor and one by Ernest C. Mansell.

On the debit side, I do question the wisdom of retaining the original Thorburn plates. No matter how attractive they may be, they fall somewhat short of modern standards of communication, with, for example, most of the waders depicted only in breeding plumage. And when I remember my tattered hip-pocket copy, I feel sure that there is a need for a hard-back edition.

Selecting 171 species to feature in a beginner's book is not easy. Fifty years ago, S. Vere Benson indulged herself with White-tailed Eagle, Golden Oriole, Hoopoe, Waxwing and Blue-headed Wagtail. Rob Hume's selection is sensibly work-a-day, but recalling the sequence in which I got my lifers, I regret the absence of, for example, Black-necked Grebe and Jack Snipe, and wonder about the retention of Avocet, a species which—as the saying goes—needs no introduction.

ROBERT SPENCER

**Waders: their breeding, haunts and watchers. By Desmond and Maimie Nethersole-Thompson.** T. & A. D. Poyser, Calton, 1986. 400 pages; 32 black-and-white plates; over 100 line-drawings. £18.00.

Dr Desmond Nethersole-Thompson has been a student of Scottish Highland birds for over 50 years and is well known for his monographs on Greenshanks, Snow Bunting, Dotterel, and

Scottish Crossbill. His contribution to our knowledge of these species, and Highland ecology in general, has been enormous. This new book, written with his wife Maimie and with contributions from sons Desmond and Patrick and others of the Thompson family, differs in covering a group rather than a single species. Like *Pine Crossbills* (1975) and *Greenshanks* (1979), *Waders* is published by T. & A. D. Poyser and is, as we have come to expect from these publishers, beautifully produced, printed and bound.

Potential readers should not be misled by the title, which suggests a comprehensive and year-round account. In fact, 'waders' are equated with 'nesting waders', and the book has almost nothing to say about the seven or more months of the year when the birds are absent from the breeding grounds, or the people who study them during that period. There are introductory chapters about waders, 'wader-watchers', and spacing and dispersion, but the core of the book is a series of 18 species accounts, mostly grouped by habitat. Shorter accounts follow for a further 16 species classified as 'new or returning' or 'pipe-dream' waders, and then a bibliography, five tables, and some sonagrams, mostly of rarely heard calls. Donald Watson's illustrations are, as ever, ornithologically accurate as well as pleasing and appropriate to the text. The photographs are mostly rather jaded portraits of incubating birds.

The real strength of the book lies in Dr Nethersole-Thompson's enthusiasm for nesting waders and in his ability to write passionately and interestingly about his subject. Many will enjoy it purely as a good read. Despite its anecdotal style, it also has value as a scientific text, both as a review of the literature and because it contains many previously unpublished data collected by the authors and their correspondents. To some extent, the authors are acting as a unique point of contact between the scientific community and various named and un-named nest-hunters whose efforts often would not otherwise result in any contribution to the general fund of knowledge. The bibliography is an extensive one, albeit with a bias towards early work, but it is unfortunate that many references quoted in the text are missing, and that there are several errors in alphabetical ordering. Obvious errors are most unusual in a Poyser book, but, in addition, at least two dozen authors or correspondents are mis-spelt, either in the text or the bibliography, and other mistakes or inconsistencies of spelling and punctuation are not difficult to find.

While the authors put themselves firmly in the conservation camp, this book may not be to the taste of birdwatchers who are especially concerned about species protection in the Highlands and Scandinavia, nor those who are squeamish generally about disturbing birds at the nest. The preface states that the authors' own egg-collecting has ceased, but the opportunity to condemn the practice is conspicuously missed, and some egg-thieves could feel that the many birds'-nesting stories are, if anything, an encouragement to their illegal activities. One such story, of pointless disturbance to Little Ringed Plover, then a rare new colonist, occupies nearly a quarter of the short species text. Surely, in the late 1980s such irresponsible behaviour should be forgotten or condemned, rather than retold with apparent admiration?

JOHN MARCHANT

**Wildfowl in Great Britain. By Myrfyn Owen, G. L. Atkinson-Willes and D. G. Salmon; illustrated by Sir Peter Scott.** Second edn. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986. 613 pages; 69 line-drawings; numerous maps. £30.00.

Twenty-three years after the publication of the first edition comes the long-awaited second edition. But let us be clear from the outset, this is no mere updated reprint. Though it follows the same general format as the original edition, it is in fact completely rewritten. In the data that are reported, however, it summarises the old and then carries on where the first edition left off.

It is, of course, a vehicle with which to report the nationwide wildfowl counts carried out monthly each winter since 1947, year in and year out, by an indefatigable band of volunteer counters. As such, it is a major record of Britain's ornithological heritage that will prove to be of immense value to all who are interested in Britain's ornithology and its welfare.

The format of the book is that of the first edition. An introductory section, describing the wildfowl counts and counting methods, ringing techniques and results, is followed by the first of three major sections. This is a detailed, area-by-area, site-by-site review of wildfowl habitats and wildfowl numbers throughout Great Britain; Ireland is not included. The major sites and areas are all described, some in considerable detail; there are many maps. Wildfowl counts,

both for all species combined and for individual species separately, are freely quoted. Often, the data go back through the period covered by the first edition.

The next major section deals successively with each of the various British wildfowl species. These accounts have full-page distribution maps—both winter and summer if appropriate—the results of important counts, graphs illustrating population changes, maps showing migration flyways, and so on. The length varies with the species; for example, the account for the two races of White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* runs to nine pages, while that of Bean Goose *A. fabalis* merits only two. The scarce species are all covered, but only briefly.

The final section deals with conservation issues and usefully reviews a number of important topics. The several major proposals for reclamation and barrage schemes are described, and their general implications for wildfowl are discussed in a laudably objective manner. Other aspects of the influence of man are also covered. Shooting, recreation, agricultural practices, mining, sand and gravel extraction: the coverage is thorough.

Sir Peter Scott's delightful line-drawings are generously scattered throughout the book, and each of the species-accounts is headed with an appropriate portrait. Some of the drawings are old friends from the first edition, but many others are specially drawn for this new one. It was perhaps to be expected that the colour plates of the original edition would not survive.

The whole is a considerable work of scholarship, and is a more than worthy successor to the first edition. It will be of great value to those for whom conservation issues are important, and to all who have more than a passing interest in wildfowl. Many will accept that, even though it may seem moderately expensive, the wealth of wildfowl information that it contains will more than justify what I am sure will prove to be a valued addition to their book shelves.

R. J. CHANDLER

## News and comment

*Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett*

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

**'Monthly marathon' prize** Pekka J. Nikander, winner of the first 'Monthly marathon' series (*Brit. Birds* 80: 342-343) has selected as his prize a SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday in Thailand. We'll report later this year on how his trip turned out.

**Golden Eagle poisoned** In the September 1987 issue of *Scottish Bird News*, there is a brief report of record levels of PCBs as well as DDE, dieldrin and mercury in an immature Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* found in Lewis. The bird had been taking Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis*, which, whatever their food at sea (probably including much fish offal), indicates that worrying levels of pollutants are present in the North Atlantic. As *SBN* points out, this emphasises the value of sending in corpses to the IIE at Monks Wood, where the analysis was carried out.

**Birds in Argyll** We have received the latest *Argyll Bird Report*, the fourth, covering 1986. The bulk of it is given over to the usual

systematic list which is liberally decorated with Philip Snow's sketches but which lacks a map — a feature which could enhance future reports. It does, however, also include monthly counts for many species, a ringing report and papers on a number of topics — the status of Corncrakes *Crex crex* on Islay, several on forestry and birdlife, Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* and land-use, and others. The Argyll Bird Club claim it as their most ambitious publication to date. You can get your copy, price £3.00, from Colin Galbraith, 4 Achagoil, Minard, Inveraray, Argyll.

. . . and Mull Philip Snow has also illustrated a new booklet by Mike Madders titled *Birds of Mull* (Mull being within the Argyll Bird Report area), which is a little gem, if only for its presentation. Many of its 50 pages are covered by annotated line-drawings, maps and half-tones which describe the best birding locations and which help to give one a feel for what must be an



13. Anthony Chapman, accompanied by David Latham of Anglian Water, opening the new hide at Grafham Water, Cambridgeshire, September 1987 (*Anglian Water*)

exciting place to birdwatch. The text comprises accounts of the habitats with their attendant species and a list of the birds recorded on the island. It is £3.50 and is published by The Saker Press, Lochdon, Mull, Argyll PA64 6AP.

... and the Lake District Written by Mike Madders and illustrated by Philip Snow, *Bird Watching in the Lake District* is a refreshingly balanced little guide, which delights as much in the ordinary as in the rarity, and has an excellent review of the various habitats thrown in for good measure. It is published by Bartholomew of Edinburgh at £3.50. (Contributed by Robert Spencer)

**Gould's 'Birds of Australia'** Margaret Cameron, a *BB* subscriber in Australia, has sent us a note in response to our report of the sale of Gould's library (*Brit. Birds* 80: 391). His own *Birds of Australia* was mostly sold to a dealer for breaking into separate plates and these were sold, she informs us, 'at a deplorably successful auction', adding the comment: 'Gross commercial vandalism', with which many would agree.

**Hide for disabled (and other) birdwatchers** On 7th September, Anthony Chapman, RSPB Reserves Officer and author of *The Countryside and Wildlife for the Disabled*, opened a new 7-m hide with facilities for the disabled at the Plummer car-park at Grafham Water in Cambridgeshire. The idea for the hide came from Anglian Water, with advice from the Beds and Hunts Wildlife Trust and Anthony Chapman himself. The hide has an access path and ramp which allow easy access from a large car park for visitors with restricted mobility. The hide overlooks one of the best parts of this large reservoir. The hide project was timed to mark the European Year of the Environment (EYE). Anglian Water's Conservation Officer, Dr Chris Spray, and Cambridge Division General Manager, David Latham, both stressed that they now want people to *use* the hide. It is only a five-minute drive from the A1 ... (JTRS)

**John Willis memorial** At Dungeness Bird Observatory on 3rd October 1987, a gather-

ing of friends and family of John Willis placed a plaque in his memory on the Observatory building. It is a testimony to the esteem in which this kindly, highly knowledgeable Kent birdwatcher was held that the North Kent Birders' Association has become established, as was his wish, and flourishes in his memory. John Willis was fatally injured in the spring of 1986, whilst watching Dalmatian Pelicans in Yugoslavia. (Contributed by Dawson Walker)

**Sevenoaks Centre opens** On 20th June, Sir Derek Barber, chairman of the Countryside Commission, opened the new Interpretative Centre at the Sevenoaks Reserve in Kent. The Centre has a lecture hall, fully equipped laboratory, and displays depicting the wildlife development in the region since the last Ice Age, including magnificent dioramas of mounted birds. The opening represents the culmination of efforts by the Harrison family and others to establish the reserve in memory of Dr Jeffery Harrison, who died suddenly in 1978. The 55-ha reserve has been created from gravel-pit excavations near the centre of Sevenoaks. Since 1960, the introduction of some 13,000 trees and 20,000 marsh plants has created a beautiful, wildlife-rich environment which is especially attractive to birds. A nature trail and several hides have been installed. The project is an internationally famous blueprint for wildlife habitat management. The reserve is open from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday (entrance £1.00), or at any time for Sevenoaks Reserve Members (annual subscription £10.00). Further information can be obtained from the Warden, The Sevenoaks Reserve, Bradbourne Vale Road, Sevenoaks, Kent; telephone Sevenoaks (0732) 456407. (Contributed by P. J. Grant)

**The late Iain Grant** He was 'Iain' to all who knew him—Lt Col. J. P. Grant of Rothiemurchus in more formal terms. His death in July 1987 marked the end of an era on Speyside, where Iain became known as one of the first Highland lairds actively to promote wildlife conservation as an integral part of the use of his land. Nobody who was around in that area in the late 1950s and 1960s will ever forget just how much he did to ensure that the newly recolonising Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* were given every chance of success: this won him an RSPB Silver Medal, and indeed he went on to

become a Vice-President of the Society. He held the same title from the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society and the Scottish Wildlife Trust, and earlier had been a founding member of the (then) Nature Conservancy and the Red Deer Commission. A man of many parts, he set a fine example to all in a period when wildlife conservation was still very much a low priority issue in many other parts of the Highlands.

**Agriculture and Scottish birds** This was the theme of the autumn conference of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club held at Edinburgh University from 11th to 13th September. The varied contributions covered specific problems such as Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* grazing agricultural land on Islay and the decline of the Corncrake *Crex crex* on Uist, as well as more general talks covering farming and conservation issues such as land 'improvements' from both a conservationist's viewpoint as well as that of crofters and farmers. The level of debate on these subjects was certainly lively, reflecting the conflict of interests between the two sides of the argument.

Two entrants correctly identified all five species in the *British Birds* mystery photographs competition, and, as Bill Brackenridge had already left the conference, Rick Goater was awarded the traditional bottle of champagne.

Many SOC members will welcome the decision to return the conference to North Berwick for 1988. (MB)

**Cyprus Bird Massacre** A new initiative to stop the slaughter of songbirds in Cyprus has been launched by the ICBP and the RSPB with the support of the Stop the Massacre Committee, formed by seven Cypriot conservation bodies. Millions of migrant birds, including Nightingales *Luscinia megarhynchos*, Blackcaps *Sylvia atricapilla* and Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita*, are killed each year, mostly caught by bird-lime, a sticky substance which is coated on sticks on which the birds then perch. The Committee is spearheading a campaign which includes sending to the President of Cyprus, Mr Kyprianou, and the High Commissioner in London up to 100,000 postcards calling for the Government of Cyprus to improve the laws protecting birds, and to enforce them. Anyone wishing to support this action should write to His Excellency, The High Commissioner of Cyprus, 93 Park Street, London W1.

**The late Ken Rooke** Everyone who knew Dr Ken Rooke was saddened by the news of his death, after a long illness, in September 1987. Nor will many of us forget his humorous comments when, not all that long ago, his death was erroneously reported in *The Ibis*. Ken, too, was a man of many parts: latterly, he perhaps became best known for his conservation work in the Cranborne area (fitted in, somehow, with the busy schedule of a country doctor)—the RSPB in particular have good cause to be grateful to him for all he did to help them in research and protection work on the local Montagu's Harriers *Circus pygargus* and Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedicephalus*—but long before that he was much involved in the birding scene in the Southwest. Among other things, he was a leading light in the founding of Portland Bill Observatory—and one of the first to suspect the occurrence of Mediterranean shearwaters off 'the Bill'. Even earlier, he had anticipated some of the theories of migration which we now take for granted—but sadly never got around to publishing his ideas until much later (1966, *XIV Int. Orn. Congr. Abstracts*). He will be greatly missed.

#### **New journal of Afrotropical ornithology**

A new journal, *Tauraco*, will publish original and review papers, in English or French, relating to Afrotropical birds, particularly field studies. It will cover sub-Saharan Africa, southwestern Arabia, Madagascar and other Indian Ocean islands, *Tauraco* will appear initially twice a year (the first is due in March 1988), but the size and frequency of issues will be increased if there is sufficient support.

Papers will be refereed by an editorial board, all of whom have considerable Afrotropical experience: R. J. Dowsett (Editor), Judy Oglethorpe (Assistant Editor), Norman Arlott (Art Editor), C. H. Fry, D. N. Johnson, M. Louette, R. B. Payne, D. E. Pomeroy, and J.-M. Thiollay.

The annual subscription to *Tauraco* is £12 or US\$25 (£20 or US\$42 for institutions), payable to Tauraco Press. Subscription orders and guidelines for authors: Mrs J. Oglethorpe, Tauraco Press, 27 Fieldside, Ely, Cambridge CB6 3AT.

**New RSNC Chief Executive** After eight years at the helm, Dr Franklyn Perring has now retired from the top position with the Royal Society for Nature Conservation.

Frank was formerly Head of the Biological Records Centre, and a valuable member of the BTO/IWC Atlas Working Group during the years leading up to *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland* (1976). We wish him a long and happy retirement.

The new Chief Executive is Tim Cordy, a geographer who comes to the RSNC with ten years' experience of town and regional planning with Leicester City Council and Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council.

**BBRC Identification Meeting** The Rarities Committee has an annual meeting in March or April to discuss principles and other general matters. At slightly less regular intervals, it holds another meeting, to discuss current identification problems. The latest such meeting was held on 11th July 1987 at the British Museum (Natural History) at Tring, where all relevant skins were made available for study. Very useful discussions took place concerning Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* (together with Manx Shearwater *P. puffinus* and Audubon's Shearwater *P. lherminieri*), male Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*, male Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* of the American race *americana*, Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*, Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* of the eastern race *humei*, and non-adult-male Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* (compared with Yellowhammer *E. citrinella* of the eastern race *erythrogenys*). Progress was made with dark morph and juvenile intermediate morph Gyrfalcon *Falco rusticolus*, South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki* (compared with Great Skua *S. skua*), and Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*. Unfortunately, little enlightenment resulted from our deliberations concerning sexing and ageing American Wigeons *Anas americana* and identification of males of various northern forms of Eiders *Somateria mollissima*, but these were the only two low spots in an otherwise highly successful day. There is already evidence within BBRC records circulations that practical use is being made of the notes and sketches prepared during the 1987 Identification Meeting. (Contributed by P. G. Lansdown)

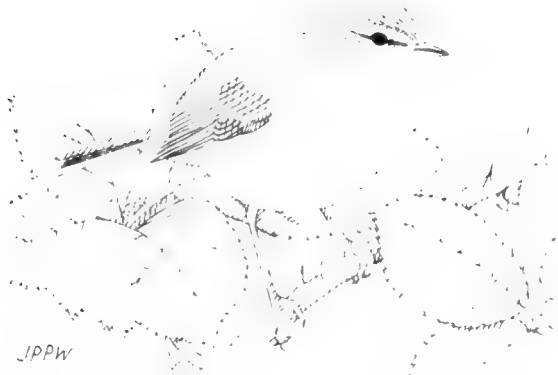
**Changes of County Recorders** Peter Hill, 10 Woodlands Avenue, Rochdale, Greater Manchester OL11 5HJ, has taken over from B. T. Shaw as Recorder for Greater Manchester. W. H. Wagstaff, 16 Ennor Close, Old Town, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly TR21 0NL, has taken over from M. J. Rogers as Recorder for the Isles of Scilly.



# September reports

*Keith Allsopp and Ian Dawson*

**These are largely unchecked reports,  
not authenticated records**



The dates in this report refer to September 1987 unless otherwise stated.

At the beginning of the month, the pressure remained high to the east, slowing the progress of the eastward-moving weather fronts and bringing occasional easterly air to northern areas. This blocking anticyclone moved farther east by 5th, allowing the Atlantic depressions to track quickly eastwards across Britain and Ireland, bringing in unsettled and windy westerly weather. From 15th, high pressure developed again nearby over Europe, bringing further short spells of easterlies in the north until 22nd, when an anticyclone began to develop over the mid Atlantic and temperatures dropped as northerly air arrived. As the centre of pressure moved eastward, the winds moved through northeast to southeast by 30th.

## Small migrants

Apart from a large passage of **Meadow Pipits** *Anthus pratensis* through Spurn (Humberside), with 8,000 on 16th, no exceptional

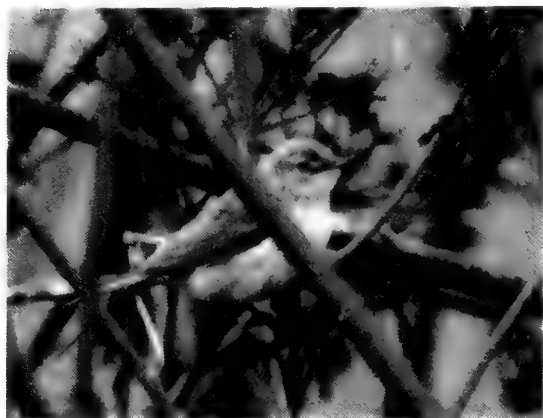
falls or concentrations were reported. On Fair Isle (Shetland) all common migrants were below their normal numbers, but the variety of rarities there and on neighbouring Orkney and Shetland was quite different from those seen in the rest of the country. The North European air masses penetrated over those islands on only a few occasions, but brought a **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* on 1st, five **Scarlet Rosefinches** *Carpodacus erythrinus* between 1st and 19th, five **Yellow-breasted Buntings** *Emberiza aureola* between 2nd and 21st, two **Rustic Buntings** *E. rustica* and three **Little Buntings** *E. pusilla* between 21st and 23rd (with one earlier on 18th farther south at Hauxley, Northumberland), four **Lanceolated Warblers** *Locustella lanceolata* between 17th and 26th, two **Arctic Warblers** *Phylloscopus borealis* between 12th and 21st, two **Bluethroats** *Luscinia svecica* on 20th, a **Paddy-field Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* on 22nd, a **Blyth's Reed Warbler** *A. dumetorum* from 27th to 29th, and an **Arctic Redpoll** *Carduelis hornemanni* between 25th and 30th. The **Savannah Sparrow** *Ammodramus sand-*

14. Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*, Dorset, September 1987 (E. Brodie)





15 & 16. Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*, Dorset, September 1987 (left, Richard G. Smith; below, Phil Atkinson)



*wichensis* which arrived on Fair Isle on 30th was, however, in keeping with a transatlantic flight along a depression track north of those normally associated with Nearctic passerine arrivals in the Southwest.

In southern Britain and Ireland, typical September vagrants were seen, with eight **Tawny Pipits** *Anthus campestris* being reported, seven **Melodious Warblers** *Hippolais polyglotta*, two **Woodchat Shrikes** *Lanius senator*, ten **Firecrests** *Regulus ignicapillus*, ten **Red-backed Shrikes** *L. collurio*, two **Aquatic Warblers** *Acrocephalus paludicola* (plate 14), a **Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla*, and two **Black-eared Wheatears** *Oenanthe*

*hispanica*. Not usually associated with this group, but found in the South, were **Booted Warblers** *Hippolais caligata* at Dungeness (Kent) on 4th and Portland Bill (Dorset) on 13th (plates 15 & 16), and a **Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephala* in the Isles of Scilly from 7th to 22nd. The 16 reports of **Wrynecks** *Jynx torquilla* were also all in the South. More generally distributed were the dozen records of **Barred Warblers** *Sylvia nisoria*, another dozen **Richard's Pipits** *Anthus novaeseelandiae*, 16 **Icterine Warblers** *Hippolais icterina*, three **Ortolan Buntings** *Emberiza hortulana* and five **Red-breasted Flycatchers** *Ficedula parva*. The arrival of the

17. Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*, Humberside, September 1987 (Keith Atkin)







18. Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, Kent, September 1987 (Reg J. Mellis)

anticyclonic easterly weather at the end of the month brought many **Yellow-browed Warblers** *Phylloscopus inornatus* mainly to the British east coast, where some 50 were reported, with singles reaching the Isles of Scilly, Bardsey Island (Gwynedd) and inland at Upton Warren (Worcestershire).

#### Wading birds

The numbers of passage waders were low, especially inland, in spite of many suitable feeding areas, but notable were the numbers of **Grey Phalaropes** *Phalaropus fulicarius* along western shores, with up to 25 being seen on seawatches during periods of strong onshore winds. In contrast, **Red-necked Phalaropes** *P. lobatus* were all found in eastern coastal districts, with singles in

seven localities, apart from one at Tacumshin (Co. Wexford). Single **Dotterels** *Charadrius morinellus* were reported from ten localities across England and Ireland. The two juvenile **Black-winged Stilts** *Himantopus himantopus* from Holme (Norfolk) spent a week at Belvide Reservoir (Staffordshire) from 1st to 7th; subsequently further reports of single juveniles came from South Ferriby Gravel-pits (Humberside) on 13th and from Swallow Pond, Wallsend (Tyne & Wear), on 15th. There was a **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata* at Sandwich Bay (Kent) from 4th to 14th.

The predominantly westerly winds did bring a good variety of Nearctic waders, the most numerous being **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos* (plate 17), with 25 being found

19. Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*, West Sussex, September 1987 (Tony Croucher)





20 & 21. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Dorset, September 1987 (P. R. Boardman)



across Britain and Ireland, usually singles, but threes together at Stithians Reservoir (Cornwall) and at Lady's Island Lake (Co. Wexford). Also widely distributed were seven reports of **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* (plate 19), but the six **Long-billed Dowitchers** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* were all in Ireland. Other species found were four **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** *Tryngites subruficollis*, three **American Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis dominica*, three **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularia*, two **White-rumped Sandpipers** *Calidris fuscicollis*, and single reports of **Baird's Sandpiper** *C. bairdii* and **Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria*. The increasing number of birdwatching hides has increased the numbers of crakes recorded, and this month's exceptional 17 reports of **Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana* were probably all seen from hides. More obvious were six **Little Egrets** *Egretta garzetta* (plates 20-22), all in England.

#### Wildfowl

A flock of 2,000 **Brent Geese** *Branta bernicla* which returned for the winter at Strangford Lough (Co. Down) contained many pairs with three or four young, indicating a good breeding season. Two of the North American/Siberian race *B. b. nigricans* were found amongst them on 21st.

22. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, West Sussex, September 1987 (Tony Croucher)



Small flocks of **Barnacle Geese** *B. leucopsis* were reported from Ireland and Scotland with the arrival of the cold northerly air at the end of the month. A **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* was also found at Flamborough Head (Humberside) on 28th. A total of nine **Red-crested Pochards** *Netta rufina* was reported among duck flocks, and six **Blue-winged Teals** *Anas discors* were recorded after 13th, suggesting an influx from America, but only three of these were in the West, the others being in the East. An **American Wigeon** *A. americana* also arrived at Bardsey Island on 30th.

### Seabirds

A feature of the month was the concentration of **Leach's Petrels** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* in the Liverpool Bay area of the Irish Sea (plates 24-25). Onshore winds from 10th brought them close inshore, and, on 14th, 380 were counted at the Seaforth Reserve (Merseyside), 274 at Blackpool (Lancashire), and 120 in Heysham Harbour (Lancashire). On the previous day, 243 had been seen at Hilbre Island (Merseyside). The small number of sightings from Walney (Cumbria), three on 13th, Corsewell Point (Dumfries & Galloway), eight on 14th, the Isle of Man, two on 14th, and South Stack (Gwynedd), seven on 14th, indicate the limited sea area covered by these birds. One was found inland, at Willen Lake (Buckinghamshire) on 16th, and also five more much later, on 27th, three being on West Midland waters and the other two at Audenshaw Reservoir (Greater Manchester) (plate 26). Earlier, on 8th, 20 had been counted on a seawatch from Ramore Head (Co. Antrim), when a **South Polar Skua** *Stercorarius maccormicki* was also seen. The seawatches in this area of the Irish Sea turned up a string of surprises: six **Storm Petrels** *Hydrobates pelagicus* at Blackpool on 14th, a **Bulwer's Petrel** *Bulweria bulwerii* at Seaforth Reserve on 19th, a **Wilson's Petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* at Ramore Head on 24th, **Little Shearwaters** *Puffinus assimilis* at Bardsey on 5th, the Isle of Man on 14th, and six at South Stack between 12th and 15th, and a **Black-browed Albatross** *Diomedea melanophrys* also at South Stack between 13th and 27th. Only one **Sooty Shearwater** *Puffinus griseus* was reported in this area, at Blackpool on 14th, and 57 at Flamborough Head on 27th was the largest count in the North Sea. In Orkney, 350 were recorded on 9th, but, off



Ireland, 3,500 were estimated passing Bridges of Ross (Co. Clare) on 12th. A few **Great Shearwaters** *P. gravis* were sighted off Cornwall in the first week, and one **Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea*, with other singles of the latter seen at Portland Bill on 13th and near Fair Isle on 26th. Ten to 20 **Pomarine Skuas** *Stercorarius pomarinus* (plates 23, 27-29) were present all month at Saltfleetby (Lincolnshire), but the numbers of skuas seen on seawatches was down compared with August. Pomarine Skuas were seen in ones and twos on seven watches, with seven **Long-tailed Skuas** *S. longicaudus* seen as singles on seven others. **Sabine's Gulls** *Larus sabini* became unusually common inshore: of the 45 reported sightings, 25 were on seawatches in the Irish Sea, and one was found inland at Pitsford Reservoir (Northamptonshire). The concentration of **Little Gulls** *L. minutus* in County Durham reached 152 on 9th, and, as in previous years, **Mediterranean Gulls** *L. melanocephalus* collected at Folkestone (Kent), where 16 were counted on 5th, with seven other reports of singles.

The four **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis* and the Newcastle **Laughing Gull** *L. atricilla* were probably all established residents, and a **Bonaparte's Gull** *L. philadelphia* at Bridlington (Humberside) on 19th also may not have been a recent transatlantic vagrant. The appearance of a **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* is always exciting news, and one was seen at Girdleness (Grampian) on 26th. An obliging **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* stayed at Plymouth (Devon) from 1st to 12th and another was seen along the North Norfolk coast on 1st. A **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* was present in Co. Wexford all month, and two others were seen at Rhyl (Clwyd) on 19th. **Black Terns** *Chlidonias niger* (plates 30 & 31) were generally scarce, and only three **White-winged Black Terns** *C. leucopterus* were seen.

23. Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*,  
Lincolnshire, September 1987  
(Keith Atkin)



- 24 & 25. Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*, Lancashire, September 1987 (Steve Young)

26. Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*, Greater Manchester, September 1987 (R. Travis)





27. Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*, North Yorkshire, August 1987 (P. J. Dunn)



28. Pomarine Skuas *Stercorarius pomarinus*, Lincolnshire, September 1987 (G. P. Catley)

29. Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*, Lincolnshire, August 1987 (M. J. Tarrant)





30 & 31. Juvenile Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*, Merseyside, September 1987 (Steve Young)



32. Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*, Gwent, September 1987 (Richard G. Smith)

33. Juvenile Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*, Lincolnshire, August 1987 (Keith Atkin)



# Monthly marathon

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The sixth photograph in the current series (*Brit. Birds* 80: 514, plate 260) must have provided a psychological problem for those entrants (17%) who had named the fifth bird (actually a Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*) as Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*. They either had to admit to themselves that they had made a mistake last time, or that, this time, what looked so like a Red-flanked Bluetail was actually something else. Perhaps it was largely they who plumped for White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis* as an alternative solution? The species named this time were:

Red-flanked Bluetail <i>Tarsiger cyanurus</i>	(55%)
White-throated Robin <i>Irania gutturalis</i>	(37%)
Siberian Rubythroat <i>Luscinia calliope</i>	(3%)
Bluethroat <i>L. svecica</i>	(2%)

with a few votes for Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*, Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* and American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla*.

It was a Red-flanked Bluetail, photographed in the USSR in autumn by M. A. Omelko.

Ola Lindblad, the leading competitor (with five in a row), was one of those who named the sixth bird as a White-throated Robin. Graham Walbridge, however, who was lying second (with four in a row), correctly named this Red-flanked Bluetail. He now has another five to go before he achieves the ten-in-a-row sequence which will win him a SUNBIRD holiday in Africa, Asia or North America. There is now a huge bunch of competitors (all on just one right) who are chasing him, and doubtless hoping that he will make a slip. The next puzzle picture appears on page 50. Please read the rules carefully before sending in your entry.

## RULES

1. Only current individual subscribers to *British Birds* are eligible to take part. Only one entry is permitted per person each month.
2. Entries must be sent by post, each one on a separate postcard, and be received at the *British Birds* Editorial Office (Monthly marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3XJ) by 15th of succeeding month. Every care will be taken, but, even if negligence is involved, no responsibility can be accepted for non-delivery, non-receipt or accidental loss of entries.
3. All 'BB' subscribers are eligible, *except* members of the Editorial Board and staff of *British Birds*, Directors and members of staff of SUNBIRD/WINGS Holidays, and Directors and members of staff of our printers, Newnorth-Burt Ltd. (Members of 'BB' Notes Panels, the Rarities Committee, and other voluntary contributors including bird-photographers, even if one of their photographs is used in the competition—are eligible unless proscribed above.)
4. To win, a *British Birds* subscriber must correctly identify the species shown in ten consecutive photographs included in this competition. The 'Monthly marathon' will continue until the prize has been won.
5. In the unlikely event of two or more 'BB' subscribers achieving the ten-in-a-row simultaneously, the competition will continue each month until one of them (or someone else!) achieves a longer run of correct entries than any other contestant.
6. In the event of any dispute, including controversy over the identity of any of the birds in the photographs, the decision of the Managing Editor of *British Birds* is final and binding on all parties.
7. No correspondence can be entered into concerning this competition.
8. The name and address of the winner will be announced in *British Birds*.





34. Second 'Monthly marathon' competition. Photograph number 9. Identify the species. Rules are given on page 49. Send your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 29th February 1988

## Recent reports

*Compiled by Mark Boyd*

This summary covers the period 1st December 1987 to 3rd January 1988

**Brent Goose** *Branta bernicla* of race *nigricans*, Cley and Blakeney (Norfolk), from 5th December.

**Red-breasted Goose** *B. ruficollis*, near Blakeney, from 7th December.

**Falcated Duck** *Anas falcata*, male, Thrapston Gravel-pit (Northamptonshire), from 12th December.

**Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris*, Timsbury Gravel-pits (Hampshire), from 13th December; Hawkridge Reservoir (Somerset), up to three from 20th December.

**Red Kite** *Milvus milvus*, over Impington (Cambridgeshire) and Blofield (Norfolk), 14th December; Colchester (Essex), 21st December; Sidcup (Greater London), 17th; Hanningfield (Essex), 2nd January.

**Little Bustard** *Tetrax tetrax*, near Christchurch (Dorset), from 1st January.

**Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus*, Chew Valley Lake (Avon) five on 5th, and singles throughout; Croxley Green (Hertfordshire), adult from 8th December.

**Sabine's Gull** *L. sabini*, Woolwich (Greater London), 7th December.

**Ring-billed Gull** *L. delawarensis*, Chew Valley Lake (Avon), throughout; Roath Park Lake (South Glamorgan) from 5th Decem-

ber; Crosby marina/Seaforth nature reserve (Merseyside), two or three throughout.

**Iceland Gull** *L. glaucoides*, Crosby marina/Seaforth nature reserve from 13th December; Banff Bay (Grampian), from 25th December, where individual of Nearctic race *kumlieni* also present from 27th.

**Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea*, Seaforth nature reserve, 3rd January.

**Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri*, Penmon, Anglesey (Gwynedd), several dates up to at least 28th December.

**Richard's Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae*, Sandwich Bay (Kent), 7th-13th, December.

**Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla*, Aldbrough (Humberside), 17th-21st December.

**Blyth's Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum*, Ouse Washes (Cambridgeshire) from November to 7th December, well-watched warbler believed to be this species.

**Pallas's Warbler** *Phylloscopus proregulus*, Climping (West Sussex), 6th December.

**Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor*, Budby Common (Nottinghamshire), from 2nd December; Rauceby Common (Lincolnshire), from 8th December; Woodbury Common (Devon) from 19th December.



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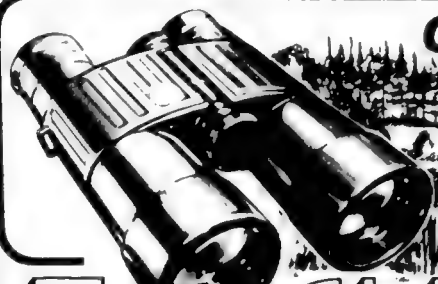
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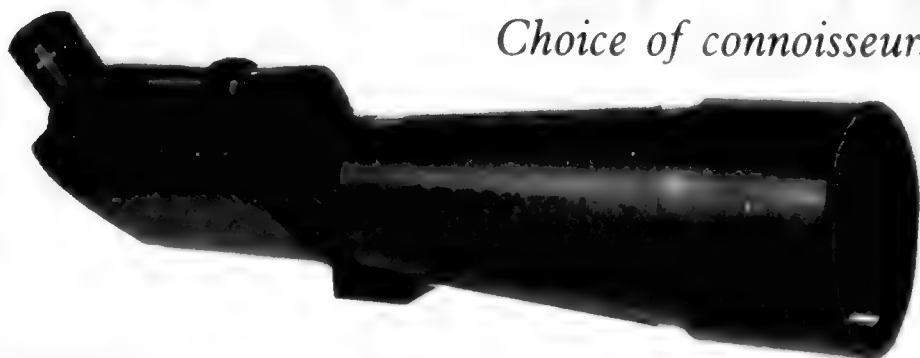
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# British Birds

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# British Birds

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**Breeding status of the Gadwall**

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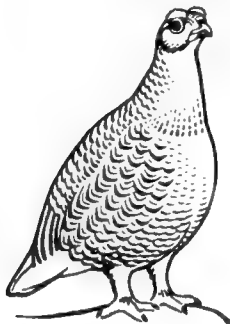
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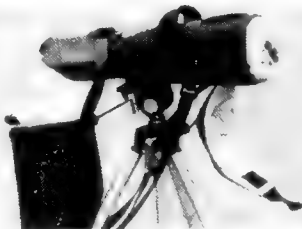
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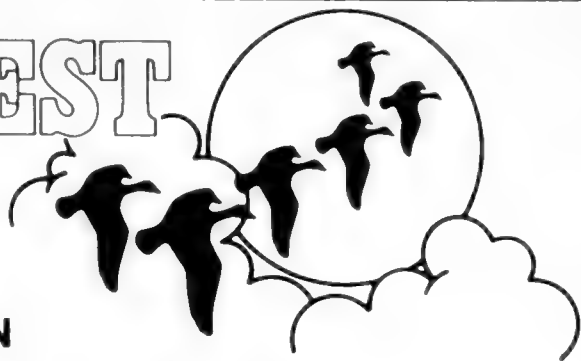
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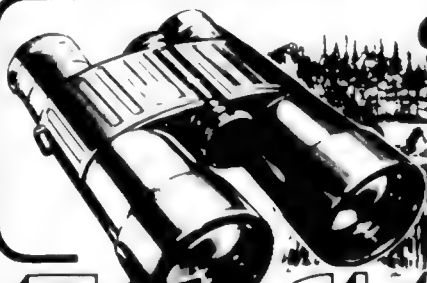
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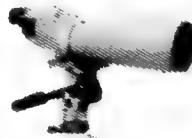
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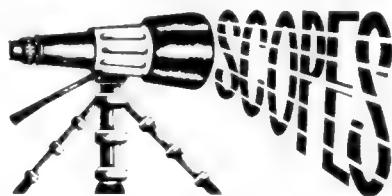
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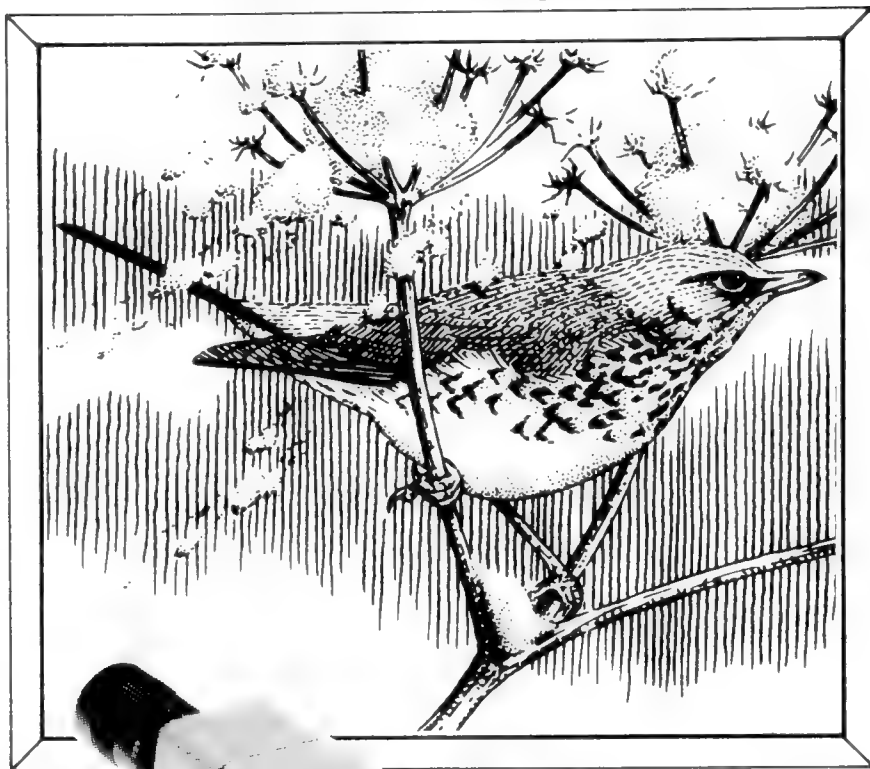
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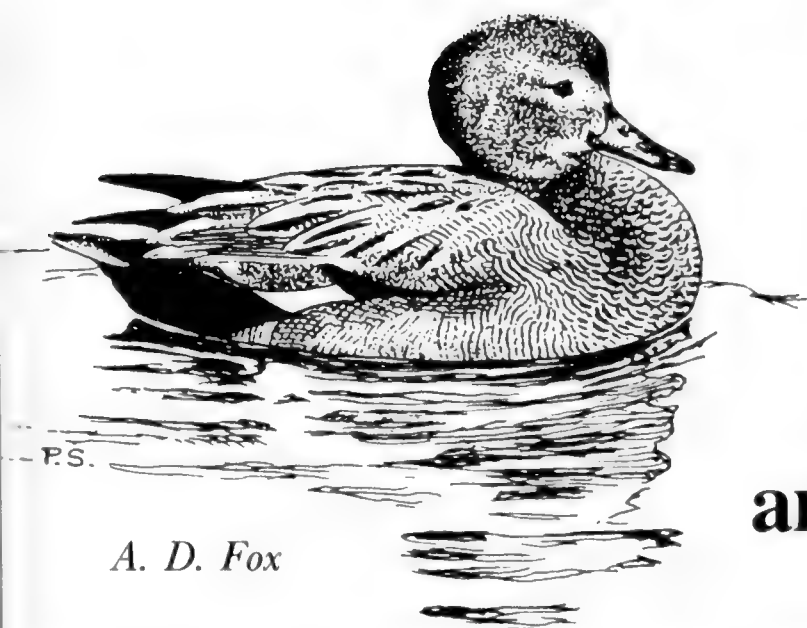
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# British Birds

VOLUME 81 NUMBER 2 FEBRUARY 1988



A. D. Fox

## Breeding status of the Gadwall in Britain and Ireland

**T**he Gadwall *Anas strepera* breeds farther south and east than most European dabbling ducks and has extended its range in western Europe during the present century (Cramp & Simmons 1977), an expansion mirrored in an eastward spread in North America linked to habitat increase (Henny & Holgersen 1974). In Europe, as in the New World, this expansion has in part been accelerated by artificial introduction, which makes interpretation of range extension difficult (Owen *et al.* 1986).

In Europe, the stronghold remains continental Russia, holding about 163,000 nesting pairs (Isakov 1970), but with a few hundred pairs elsewhere. Expansion from this core range reached Iceland perhaps as early as 1819 (Faber 1822; Gudmundsson 1979), and there the species has increased and spread from its stronghold, Lake Myvatn, to number about 300 pairs (Cramp & Simmons 1977). Consolidation of the small breeding stock in southern Sweden during the present century is also linked to a general expansion during a period of climate amelioration (Sharrock 1976).

Recent increases in wintering numbers (Fox & Salmon in prep.) and in breeding and passage numbers in Britain, whether artificially aided or natural, have been dramatic. There were an estimated 600-610 breeding pairs in Britain and Ireland in 1983. The present paper attempts to summarise the British and Irish status of this duck and to account for the expansion of the breeding population since the initial introductions.

## Methods

Since 1974, the numbers of ducks, geese and swans have been counted every month from September to March at as many coastal and inland localities as possible in Britain and Northern Ireland under the Wildfowl Trust's National Wildfowl Counts scheme (Owen *et al.* 1986); counts are made on the Sunday nearest to the middle of each month. The present analysis uses September counts from 1960 to 1985, based on the assumption of Owen *et al.* (1986) that Gadwalls present in that month represent the resident breeding population. This assumption seems reasonable given the lack of foreign-ringed Gadwalls recovered in Britain before November (unpublished data) and the fact that at well-studied sites, such as Loch Leven, Kinross, total numbers in September accord closely with the production of the breeding population for any given year. It may be that some exceptional sites, such as Rutland Water, Leicestershire (the most important British site in September, the Gadwall count totalling 670 in 1984), do draw moulting breeders with their offspring from surrounding wetlands rather than supporting site-bred families alone, but this still implies little more than local movements.

Gadwall counts in September came from between 419 (1961) and 1,236 (1984) different sites annually. Analysis shows that 96% of the total British population occur on 50% of waters counted where Gadwalls were present, many sites contributing a tiny proportion of the total. It is considered that sites of most importance are covered in most years, and hence counts do give a fair representation of the national population.

Using the following methods, count data were used to assess trends in population size independently of the number of sites counted in any one season:

- (a) Beginning in 1960-61, each pair of years was considered together (i.e. 1960 with 1961, 1961 with 1962, etc.). Sites counted in September of both years are included in a paired sample, and the total number of ducks at all the paired sites in each year established.
- (b) The ratio of the two totals was calculated for each of the 25 pairs of years up to 1985.
- (c) Winter 1970/71 was selected as an arbitrary standard set to an index of 100, against which years before and after are indexed; working backwards and forwards from this standard, an index for a particular year was calculated from the ratio of the current year's to the preceding years' counts (pre 1970/71) or to those of subsequent years (post 1970/71).

This method is used below to analyse national trends and patterns among the major catchment divisions described by Owen *et al.* (1986). Regression analysis of population trends, transformed using natural logarithms, has been carried out in appropriate situations. Additional information is derived from total wildfowl counts for each year and for regional catchment totals calculated from the main database of count information.

In the absence of a full breeding survey of Gadwalls in Britain and Ireland, the present account relies heavily on the work of Sharrock (1976) for Britain and Hutchinson (1979) for Ireland, updated and extended by reference to county avifaunas and annual bird reports to compile a national perspective for summer 1983.

## Results

During 1960-85, Gadwalls counted in Britain in September have increased substantially, both in range (fig. 1) and in total numbers (fig. 2). The logarithmic regression fitted to trend data<sup>1</sup> corresponds well with the 4.5-5% expansion in breeding numbers, from an estimated 260 pairs in the early 1970s (Sharrock 1976) to 500-600 pairs currently thought to nest in Britain (Owen *et al.* 1986; see also fig. 3 and below). This expansion has been most pronounced at artificial reservoirs: numbers on these waters as a proportion of the total for all habitats have risen from 14% in 1970 to 49% in 1984, despite reservoirs comprising a constant proportion of the habitat types represented in counts (fig. 4). The population index for reservoirs also shows an increase, a logarithmic growth equivalent to 2% per annum<sup>2</sup> (fig. 4). Increases in the proportion of Gadwalls using reservoirs in September correlate with declines in the percentage on natural lakes and coastal waters; since numbers using natural waters have risen by 1.6% per year, it is clear that the falling proportions result not from birds moving from natural waters to reservoirs, but from a more rapid increase at these latter habitats. Analysis of the data on known breeding habitat of Gadwalls in Britain in 1983 (table 1) shows that reservoirs are by far the most important sites. Over the same period, the proportion of Gadwalls at gravel-pits has increased slightly, from 9% to 13%, although the population trend shows no significant increase for this habitat type.



35. Female Gadwall *Anas strepera*, Netherlands, January 1985 (Arnoud B. van den Berg)

<sup>1</sup>Statistical information, numbered <sup>1</sup> to <sup>6</sup> in the text, is given in Appendix 1.

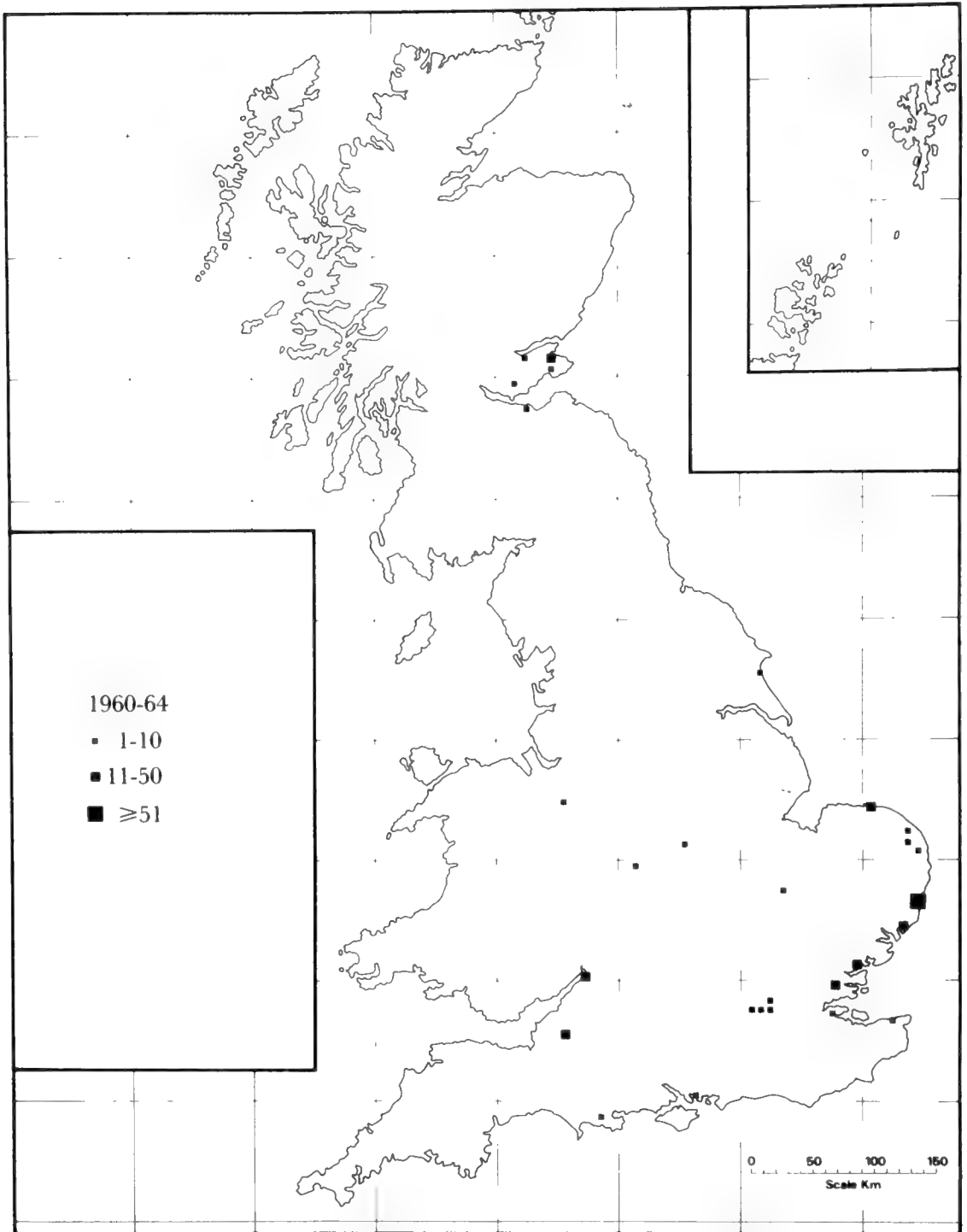
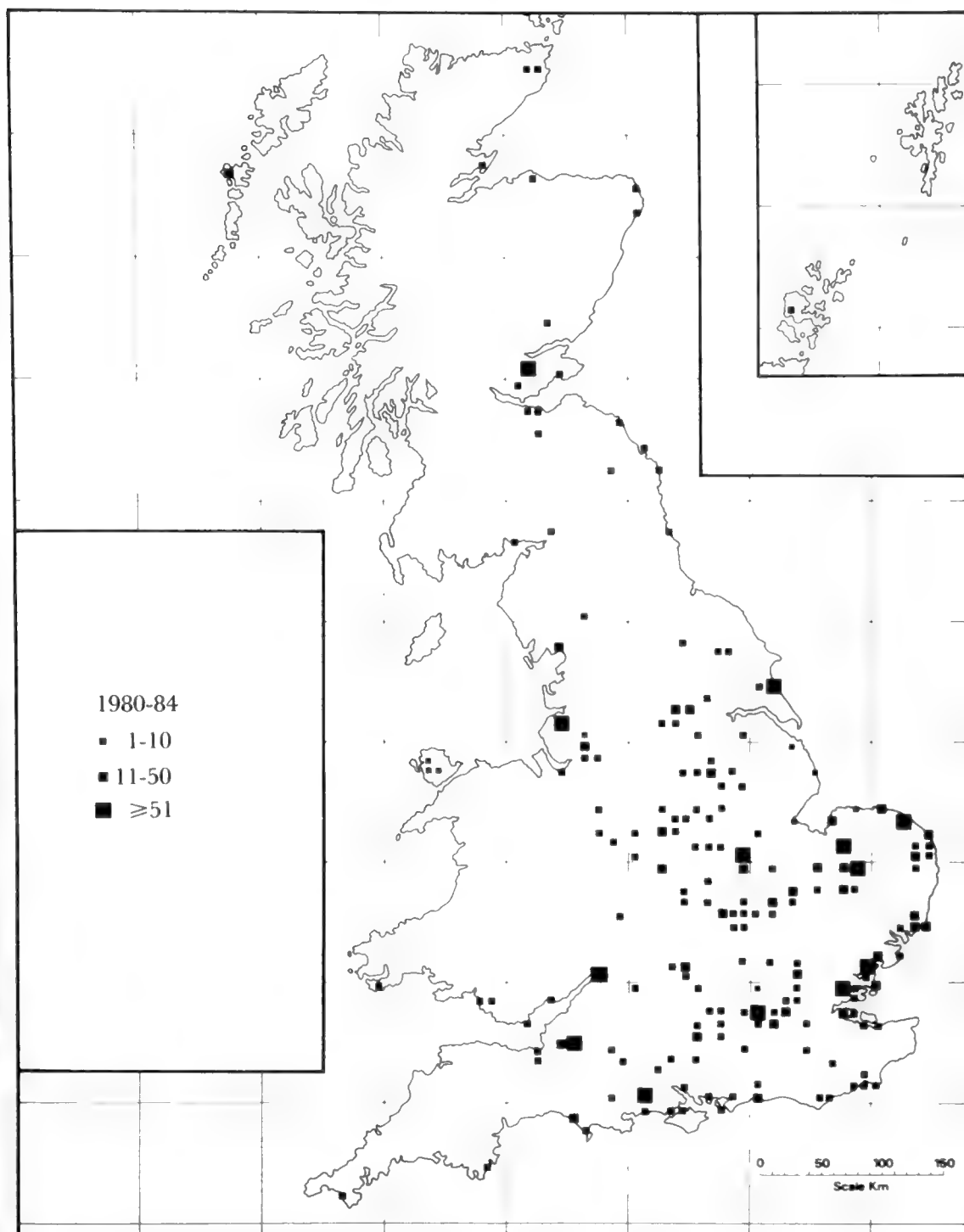


Fig. 1. Distribution of Gadwalls *Anas strepera* counted in Britain in September 1960-64.

Over 90% of Gadwalls counted in Britain in the past 25 years have been in the east and central, the southeast and the southwest parts of England and in southeast Scotland. Detailed analysis of trend data from counts are, therefore, restricted to these areas.

#### *East and Central England*

Gadwalls almost certainly did not breed in Britain and Ireland before around 1850, when a pair was caught in Dersingham Decoy, pinioned, and released on to Narford Lake, near Narborough, Norfolk, by Rev. John Fountaine. These bred, and their descendants rapidly spread to other



1960-64 and 1980-84. Totals for 10-km squares are five-year means

Breckland waters, crossing into Suffolk by 1897, their spread thought to be aided by Continental Gadwalls which wintered in the area before the presence of the feral population (Stevenson & Southwell 1890; Riviere 1930). Colonisation of the Broads and the north Norfolk coast (focused on Cley) began in the 1950s (Seago 1977), and by the early 1960s breeding was frequent throughout the county. Expansion has slowed in recent years, but Norfolk remains the British nesting stronghold, with some 150-200 pairs.

Colonisation of Cambridgeshire was slow. A pair nested at Wicken Fen in 1917, but further breeding was not suspected until 1930, when the

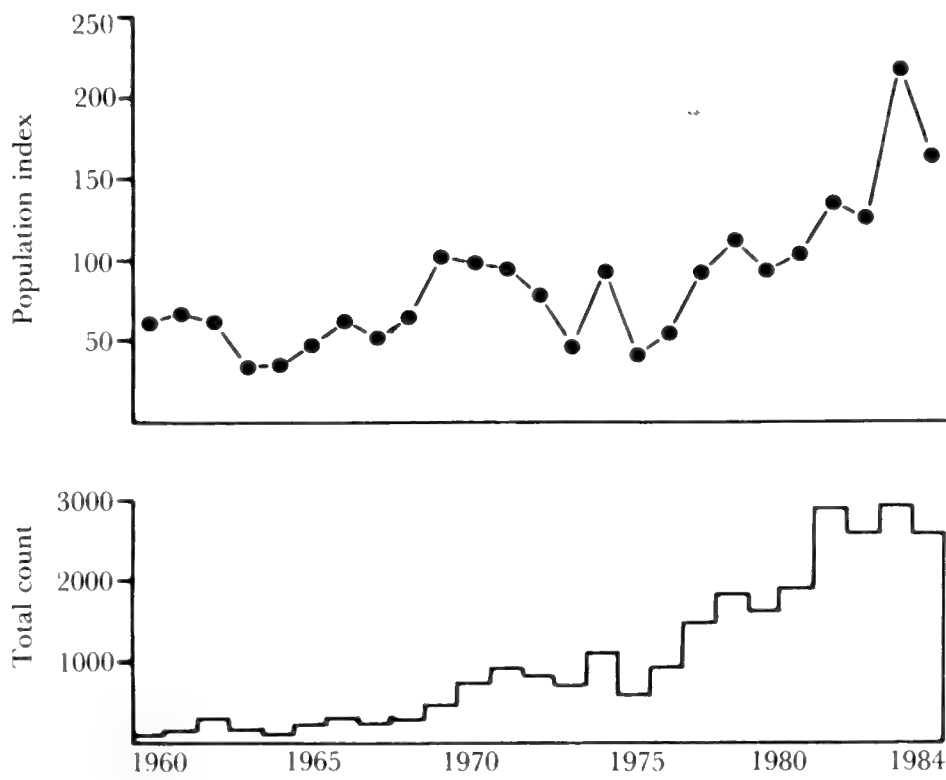


Fig. 2. Population trends and September count totals of Gadwalls *Anas strepera* in Britain, 1980-84

species was still a scarce visitor (Lack 1934). Pairs summered on the Ouse Washes every year from 1953, and habitat management has since helped the breeding population to increase, with up to 80 pairs summering in 1983; breeding success varies, however, with water-table fluctuations (Thomas 1978; Cambridge Bird Reports). Gadwalls which summered at Wicken Fen and Cambridge Sewage-farm in 1964 were thought to have been liberated by wildfowling organisations which were at that time releasing Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos* at Sutton Bridge Pool. Nesting has become regular at Wicken Fen, Cam Washes, Nene Washes (up to 14 pairs in 1981), Kennett Gravel-pits, Ely Beet-factory and Grafham Water (Cambridge Bird Reports).

The species has bred sporadically in Lincolnshire since 1965 (Lincolnshire Bird Reports), and there is a small Northamptonshire breeding population at Pitsford Reservoir, Ravensthorpe Reservoir, Ditchford and Thrapston Gravel-pits (Northamptonshire Bird Reports).

Gadwalls were rare in Leicestershire before 1960, but breeding has been

Table 1. Different nesting habitats, where known, used by Gadwalls *Anas strepera* in Britain, based on local bird reports for 1983

Data exclude Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Norfolk, for which information is not available

	Natural waters	Reser-voirs	Gravel-pits, etc.	Marshes & floods	Coastal
No. of pairs	37	86	23	25	3
Percentage of total pairs	21%	49%	13%	14%	2%

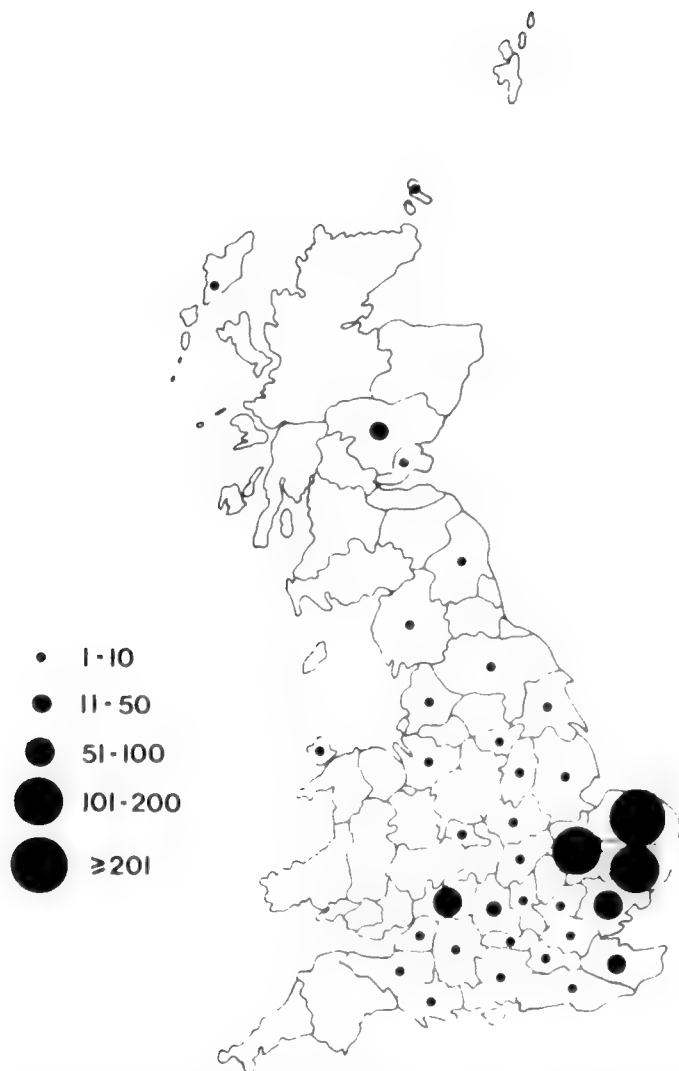


Fig. 3. Minimum numbers of pairs of summering Gadwalls *Anas strepera* by county/region in Britain, 1983. Data from local bird reports. Note that at least 86% of records refer to successful nesting pairs

regular at Eye Brook Reservoir since 1966 and at Cropston Reservoir since 1980 (Mitcham 1984). Nesting occurred in Derbyshire (Locko Park) in 1957, probably following wildfowl club releases (Frost 1978), while in Nottinghamshire there has been an established breeding population since nesting was first proven in 1968 (Dobbs 1975), numbering nine pairs at eight sites in 1983 (Birds of Nottinghamshire annual reports).

In Yorkshire, a pair summered at Hornsea Mere in 1946. Breeding was proved near Wakefield in 1954 and has occurred in most years from 1965 at nine sites, at least six pairs breeding successfully in 1979 and 1980 (Mather 1986). In 1962, 900 Gadwalls were released by wildfowlers in the Lake District, and a few were released in Yorkshire in 1964; some of the expansion in the mid 1960s may, therefore, have been due to these introductions. More recently, two pairs were released on to Newmiller-dam in 1977, and breeding took place in that year, in 1979 and in 1980 (Mather 1986).

Apart from peaks in the early 1960s and early 1970s, population trends in eastern and central England have been stable. Count totals have shown a substantial increase (fig. 5), but this is largely a function of number of

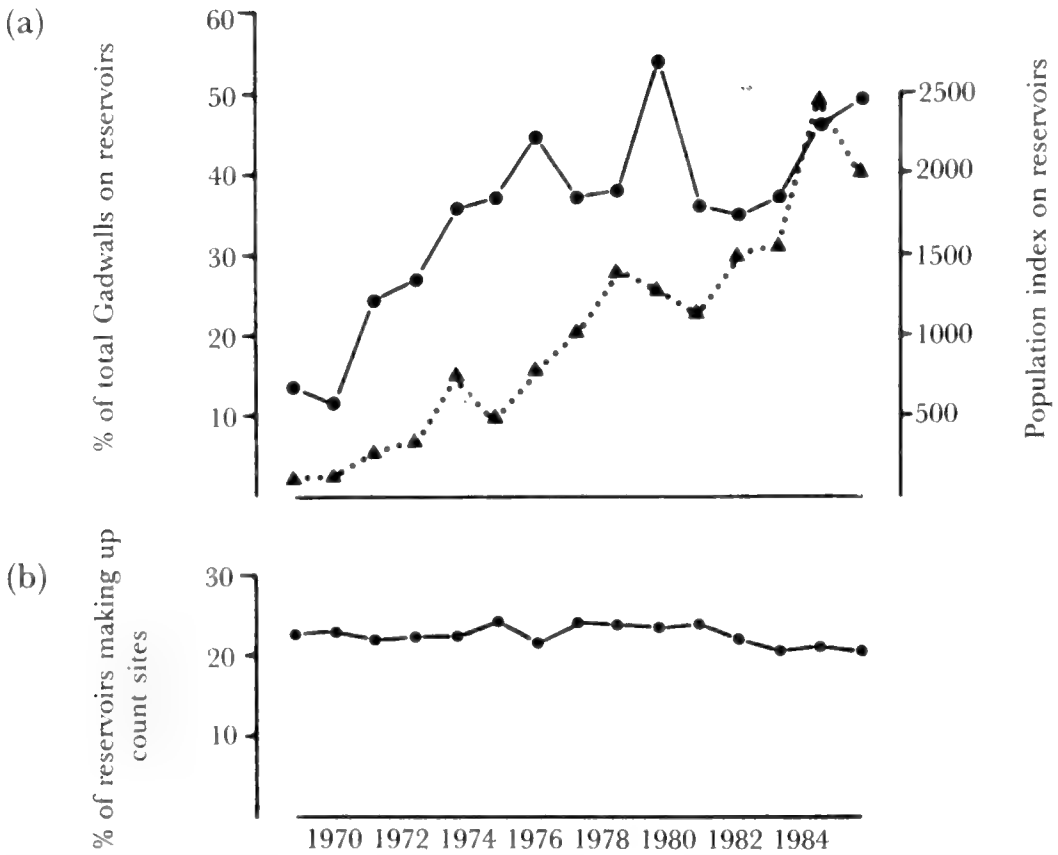


Fig. 4. (a) Percentage of total September counts of Gadwalls *Anas strepera* recorded on reservoirs (solid line), with population index for this habitat (dotted line), 1970-84. (b) Percentage of total sites counted which were reservoirs, 1970-84

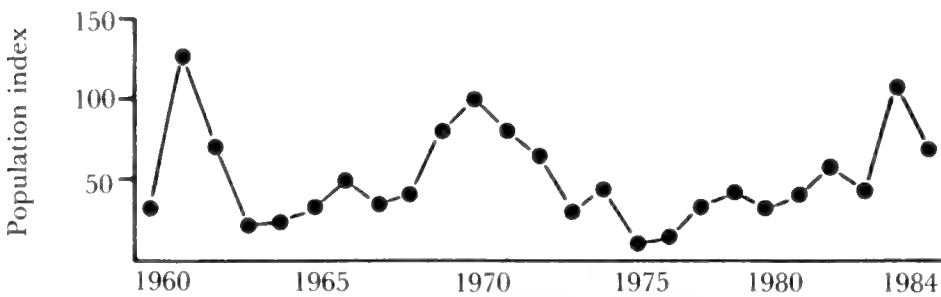


Fig. 5. Population trends of Gadwall *Anas strepera* from September count totals, eastern and central England, 1960-84

sites covered (110 in 1960, 354 in 1984), which correlates with the increase in total numbers recorded<sup>3</sup>. Hence, while small outlying populations away from Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire continue to expand, there are few signs of current expansion within areas with the longest established breeding populations.

#### Southeast England

In Berkshire, a pair nested at Dinton Pastures in 1983, the second breeding record of Gadwalls in the county. In Oxfordshire, breeding has been regular for a number of years at Blenheim, and in Buckinghamshire two to five pairs summer annually.

Breeding was confirmed in Hampshire in 1983, when two broods were



raised at Winchester Sewage-farm (Hampshire Bird Reports). In Sussex, breeding was strongly suspected when Gadwalls were shot in July 1904 and May 1906 (Walpole-Bond 1938); in 1976, three pairs in the Wildfowl Trust collection at Arundel reared 24 young, establishing a feral population, although only five pairs summered in Sussex in 1983 (Sussex Bird Reports).

Gadwalls may have nested on Faversham Marshes, Kent, as early as 1922 (Gillham & Homes 1950) and perhaps on the East Kent Marshes during 1928-38 (Harrison 1953); in 1947, breeding was confirmed on the North Kent Marshes (Gillham & Homes 1950). Between 1964 and 1972, 131 hand-reared Gadwalls were liberated at Sevenoaks Gravel-pits, and up to four pairs have bred there regularly from 1970 to the present (Harrison 1974; Taylor *et al.* 1981). In the Stour Valley, pairs summered regularly from the late 1950s, first bred successfully in 1966, and numbered five pairs by 1975; while in North Kent the species has nested since 1969, occasionally on Sheppey and the Medway, but most often on the Thames Marshes (Taylor *et al.* 1981). Subsequent breeding at Godstone, Ruxley and other Surrey/Kent localities doubtless stems from feral populations derived from Sevenoaks (Harrison 1974; Montier 1977). The breeding population continues to expand in Kent, with 29 pairs reported in 1983 (Kent Bird Reports).

Gadwalls were scarce vagrants to London before 1932, in which year 15 young, reared to full-wing from captive stock in St James's Park, dispersed when the lake was drained and individuals turned up at Kensington Gardens, Staines and Godstone. By 1935, the species was regularly present at Barn Elms Reservoirs, and in that summer 46 young were hatched at St James's Park. Breeding from this feral stock occurred annually at Barn Elms or at nearby Lonsdale Road Reservoirs until the late 1950s (Homes 1957; Parr 1972). Since 1958, Gadwalls have summered in most years at Barn Elms, but have bred only in 1963 and 1969. Nesting

36. Male Gadwall *Anas strepera*, with Coots *Fulica atra*, Netherlands, January 1985 (Arnoud B. van den Berg)



at Cheshunt and at Walthamstow Reservoirs presumably relates to birds of similar origin (Montier 1977).

The species bred at Tring Reservoirs in 1928, but there are no recent breeding records from Hertfordshire (apart from at Cheshunt), despite a few individuals summering (Mead & Smith 1982; Gladwin & Sage 1986).

A pair of Gadwalls nested on the Crouch Marshes, Essex, in 1921 (Glegg 1929). No further breeding took place in the county until 1950, when a brood was seen at Abberton, and nesting has been proved there annually (up to 11 pairs) since 1970. Breeding has since been recorded from ten other Essex sites (Hudson & Pyman 1968; Cox 1984).

By 1907, Gadwalls were breeding in Suffolk in the Lark Valley and at the headwaters of the River Waveney, and in the early 1930s the species spread to coastal areas. By 1950, ten pairs nested at Minsmere, with others at Havergate Island, Benacre and Walberswick, and in the 1960s the Orwell, Stour and several other river systems had been colonised. The increase continues to the present day, the 1983 population standing at over 100 pairs, more than 40 of these at Minsmere (Payn 1978; Suffolk Bird Reports).

September numbers in southeast England show a pronounced expansion in recent years, accounting for an increase of 9% per annum.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Southwest England and South Wales*

Breeding Gadwalls were found during *Atlas* fieldwork in Glamorgan and Radnor (Sharrock 1976), but in neither case did the species become established. Walker & Smith (1975) described feral birds breeding for some years at Rudhall Pools, Herefordshire.

In the West Midlands, breeding may have commenced as early as 1923-24, while a Gadwall raised by pinioned parents at Burton-upon-Trent in 1933 was recovered at Meriden before the end of that year, showing that feral individuals were in the area at that time (Harrison *et al.* 1982). Breeding has occurred at Belvide Reservoir since 1970 and at two sites in Warwickshire since 1979, with a total of six broods in 1983.

A Gloucestershire breeding population was established by the Wildfowl Trust at Slimbridge, the feral progeny of full-winged, hand-reared individuals becoming quickly established. Breeding occurred nearby at Frampton in 1956, and the increasing population in and around the Wildfowl Trust enclosures was augmented in 1967 by 20 released Gadwalls. By 1969, 20 pairs were breeding in the neighbourhood, and nesting has since occurred at three other sites (Swaine 1982; Gloucestershire Bird Reports). This nucleus gave rise to the Chew Valley Lake population, estimated at 20-25 pairs in the early 1970s (Sharrock 1976) and with six pairs nesting successfully in 1983. Breeding has taken place regularly at Blagdon Reservoir and sporadically at other Avon sites. The same source probably gave rise to small populations in Somerset (one pair in 1983) and in Wiltshire, where a pair nested in 1984 at Clarendon Lake (Somerset and Wiltshire Bird Reports).

There are no breeding records from Devon and Cornwall, but Gadwalls bred annually on Tresco, Isles of Scilly, from 1934, when a wild pinioned

drake, released on to The Pool, paired with a wild female, leading to a population of about 12 pairs in the late 1960s. The Gadwall has bred regularly in Dorset only since 1970, with successful nesting attempts in 1973, 1978 and 1981 (Prendergast & Boys 1983).

Colonisation from the Gloucestershire nucleus appears to be spreading exponentially, with September trends for southwest England showing a mean 9.5% increase each year<sup>5</sup> over the period 1960-84.

#### *Northwest England and North Wales*

Gadwalls appeared at Martin Mere almost as soon as the collection was established there, and since 1973 have been supplemented by feral progeny of pinioned birds. They breed within the collection, and in most recent years have numbered 200-300 in September. There are no positive records of the species breeding away from the reserve, but it seems highly likely that this occurs.

Mitchell & Dobson (1976) recorded Gadwalls breeding at a Westmorland tarn in 1973 'and previous years back to at least 1958', but, despite the 900 individuals released in the Lake District in 1962, there remains no nucleus stock in this area, although one pair bred in north Cumbria in 1983 (Birds in Cumbria annual reports). Two pairs displayed at Leighton Moss in spring 1972 (Spencer 1973), and the species has bred there since. In Cheshire, at least two pairs summered during 1983, after breeding was proved in 1982 (Cheshire Bird Reports).

Since 1975, breeding has been confirmed at five sites in Anglesey, and this may mark the start of colonisation there (Lovegrove *et al.* 1980).

#### *Tees, Tyneside and Borders*

Although Gadwalls are regular spring migrants in suitable habitat in both counties, there are no breeding records up to 1983 from either Cleveland (Cleveland Bird Reports) or Durham (Durham Bird Club Reports). A ringed individual shot at Holy Island, Northumberland, on 20th February 1917 had been marked as a nestling of captive parents 30 km away in Alnwick Park in August 1915 (Bolam 1932), indicating another source of full-winged Gadwalls early this century. This species first bred at large in Northumberland in 1965, the 1983 population numbering three summering pairs (Tyneside Bird Club Reports).

#### *Southwest Scotland*

The Gadwall has always been rare in the southwest of Scotland, the first recorded occurrence on the Solway being not until 1900. To this day it remains scarce, and the first breeding attempt in Ayr in 1974 involved hybridisation with a Mallard (Thom 1986).

#### *Southeast Scotland*

The nucleus of the Scottish Gadwall population has long been at Loch Leven in Kinross. This duck's appearance in 1908 has never been linked to known introductions, and Baxter & Rintoul (1922) never hinted that they suspected a feral population. Although Walpole-Bond (1938)

referred to this population ambiguously as 'genuinely feral', he presumably meant truly wild rather than stemming originally from captive-bred stock. Pinioned Gadwalls were, however, kept at Rachan Pond, Peebles-shire, for many years before 1906 and their offspring flew free and were never known to return (Baxter & Rintoul 1922). Given the dates involved and the possibility that other contemporary introductions may have gone unreported, it may well be that the Loch Leven flock is not of genuinely wild stock.

Two pairs were observed at Loch Leven in 1908, but no nest was found; two nests were discovered in the following year and breeding has taken place annually since then, numbering 25-40 pairs in most years (Baxter & Rintoul 1922; Allison *et al.* 1974; Thom 1986; Wright 1986). The nesting duck most vulnerable to disturbance, this species has been highly susceptible to late-autumn shooting before moving south for the winter (Newton & Campbell 1975). For this reason, attempts were made in 1973-74 to augment wild stock with artificially reared birds, but only five survived to be set free and none was released subsequently (Allison *et al.* 1974; G. A. Wright *in litt.*).

A breeding record from Mid Lothian in 1916 was the first report of this duck in that region, suggesting that feral birds were involved. Gadwalls bred in 1933-34 and again in the early 1960s, but regular breeding has not become established in the Lothians (Baxter & Rintoul 1922; Thom 1986; Scottish Bird Reports). In Fife, Gadwalls nested as long ago as 1918, and one to five pairs continue to breed or summer in most years. The regular Perthshire breeding population numbers up to 19 pairs (1971), although the usual maximum in recent years has been five. Similarly, Angus supported one to five regularly nesting pairs during 1981-83.

As in East Anglia, it would appear that the longer-established populations in southwest Scotland have shown only a slow expansion during the period 1960-84 (fig. 6), although the trend is distorted by the high variance of small sample sizes in the 1960s. Analysis of trend data since 1973 shows a 2% increase in the population<sup>6</sup>, reflecting the spread into Perth, Angus and Fife over the period.

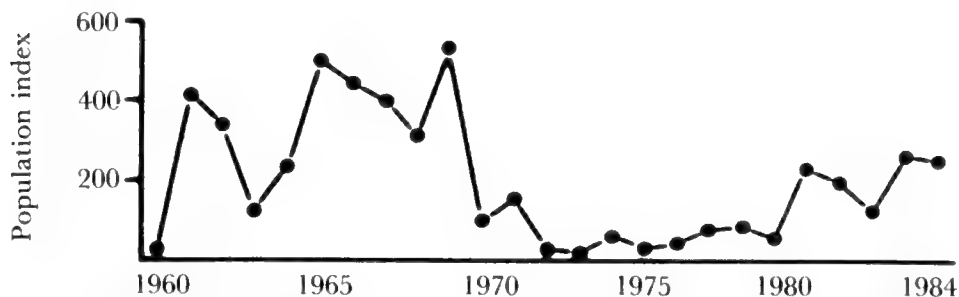


Fig. 6. Population trends of Gadwall *Anas strepera* from September count totals, southeastern Scotland, 1960-84

#### Northeast Scotland

Although Gadwalls with young were recorded in 1913 in Ross-shire (Baxter & Rintoul 1922), there have been no records since. The species

bred in Sutherland in 1913, summering again in 1958-61. In Caithness, young were seen at a loch in 1912 and two pairs bred in 1914; whether this population persisted to the present day remains obscure, but individuals were breeding in the mid 1970s and have done sporadically since. Dispersal perhaps from this population led to first nesting attempts in Orkney, on Sanday in 1969, and up to four pairs now nest there regularly (Booth *et al.* 1984; Thom 1986).

#### *Northwest Scotland*

Breeding was first proven at Balranald, North Uist, in the 1970s, and numbers have increased there and at Loch Hallan to give a population of ten pairs by 1980 (Scottish Bird Reports). In 1983, Gadwalls bred on Tìree, where they were said to nest in the nineteenth century (Baxter & Rintoul 1922), and a female was seen with two well-grown young at Kyleakin, Skye, in September 1968: these are the only recent suggestions of breeding in the Inner Hebrides (Thom 1986). There is also an *Atlas* record from Rannoch (Sharrock 1976), but regular nesting has not been established in the Highlands.

#### *Ireland*

First recorded breeding in 1933, Gadwalls are thought to have colonised Ireland naturally (Sharrock 1976). By the late 1970s, however, Hutchinson (1979) considered that no more than ten pairs nested, with breeding proven in Co. Wexford, Co. Kerry and at Lough Neagh. Since 1977, the species has bred regularly at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, and from 1978 more or less regularly at Lough Corrib, Co. Galway. Past breeding attempts from Co. Donegal and Co. Roscommon are well documented (Ruttledge 1966; Humphreys 1978). It is unlikely that the Irish breeding population exceeds 20 pairs in any one year.

### **Discussion**

There is no doubt that the present Gadwall breeding population in Britain derives very largely from introduced stock. What contribution has come from inducement of migrant or wintering wild individuals to breed will never be known. Since 27% of Gadwalls ringed in Britain have been recovered on the Continent (Owen *et al.* 1986), however, population interchange clearly occurs. Recent dramatic increases in numbers wintering in the Low Countries (Ruger *et al.* 1986) and an extension of the breeding range make it highly likely that Continental Gadwalls have contributed to the species' recent spread in Britain. This appears especially possible since the East Anglian population expanded considerably during the nineteenth century from the time of its artificial establishment, but now shows signs of stabilising. Dispersal away from the initial Norfolk nucleus was apparently slow during the last century, and this seems to be the case with all subsequent introductions. In many areas, particularly Scotland at the beginning of the present century, sporadic breeding occurred in widely scattered places, but regular nesting

never became established; feral Gadwalls reared in Peebles and Northumberland (and doubtless elsewhere) may have been the source of these birds. In some areas, notably Loch Leven, a breeding population did become established at this time, yet expansion apparently did not occur until recently; in the case of Loch Leven, this may have been due to the past heavy shooting pressure on the species (Allison *et al.* 1974) and to the creation of artificial habitat (such as reservoirs and pools associated with mining subsidence) in areas immediately adjacent to the loch.

In the 1930s, free-flying Gadwalls dispersed from London, the Isles of Scilly and Staffordshire, although the latter introductions never gave rise to semi-permanent populations. Small-scale introductions were made in Derbyshire and Herefordshire in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but it is in the southeast and southwest of England that the expansion in numbers over the last 25 years has been most dramatic, owing at least in part to further introductions of free-flying ducks from the Sevenoaks reserve in Kent and the Wildfowl Trust collections at Arundel and Slimbridge. Again, the long-established populations in these areas show little sign of expansion at present, and indeed, both at Barn Elms and in the Isles of Scilly, breeding has ceased in recent years. The huge injection of Gadwalls into the Lake District appears not to have induced population development there (presumably because of lack of well-vegetated waters in the area of introduction), but this seems a likely origin of the birds breeding in suitable habitat in Yorkshire. The availability of suitable well-vegetated eutrophic waters, which appear to be the Gadwall's preferred breeding habitat (Cramp & Simmons 1977), has been a major influence on population development throughout Britain. As reservoirs, gravel-pits and other base-rich artificial waters become available, and lowland waters are subject to further eutrophication, there is little doubt that the Gadwall will continue to increase in Britain and Ireland.

### Acknowledgments

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### Summary

Analysis of National Wildfowl Count data for the Gadwall *Anas strepera* in September shows a 4.6% annual increase in population trends in Britain over the period 1960-85. There is considerable regional variation, with increases of 9.5% in southwest England, 9% in the southwest, and a stable population in eastern and central England, which contrasts with a 2% expansion in southeast Scotland during 1973-85. Increases in September numbers in areas where introductions have taken place correlate well with the documented growth in nesting pairs, and reflect the ability of feral populations to exploit an increase in available breeding habitat. Longer-established populations in southeast Scotland and East Anglia show more stable population trends, reflecting the sedentary nature of the species and more-complete

habitat occupancy. There were 600-610 breeding pairs in Britain and Ireland in 1983. It is suggested that, with the possible exception of the Scottish populations, the main colonisation of Britain has been achieved only with the aid of introductions; the Irish population may have colonised naturally.

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#### Appendix 1. Statistical results obtained in analyses of population trends

- |  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1. slope = 4.6%, $r = 0.71$ , $P < 0.01$ | 4. $r = 0.81$ , $P < 0.01$   |
| 2. $r = 0.95$ , $P < 0.001$              | 5. $r = 0.81$ , $P < 0.001$  |
| 3. $r = 0.89$ , $P < 0.001$              | 6. $r = 0.903$ , $P < 0.001$ |

## Mystery photographs

**128** No prizes for identifying this bird as an auk, indeed Guillemot *Uria aalge* should have been the first reaction. Of the three similar auks in the Western Palearctic, Razorbill *Alca torda* can be instantly ruled out as our bird has a square, not pointed tail and the bill is long and tapering rather than short and thick with vertical white bands. The other species, Brünnich's Guillemot *U. lomvia*, requires more care to separate



from Guillemot. One of the most important features of Brünnich's is the presence of a pale stripe along the cutting edge at the base of the upper mandible (white basally, shading to pale grey). A closer look at the photograph shows that our bird has just such a line. Well, could it be a Brünnich's? Let's examine some of the other features. Even in a black-and-white photograph, we can see that our bird is not really black above; in fact the relatively pale (brown) upperparts indicate that this is a southern Guillemot of the West European race *U. a. albionis* which in



Britain breeds from southern Scotland southwards. The nominate race, which breeds in northern Scotland, the Faroes, Greenland, Iceland and parts of eastern Canada and northern Norway, is considerably darker above, but still not the Razorbill-black of a Brünnich's Guillemot. Looking at the flanks of our bird, we can see that there is some dark streaking; this is a variable feature of Guillemot, but all individuals show some streaks, a feature not present on Brünnich's. But what about that pale bill-stripe? Well, that's a red-herring. Small numbers of Guillemots show this feature, but it is never so prominent nor so well developed as that of Brünnich's. A better guide is the shape of the bill. On Brünnich's, the bill is both shorter (about half the loral distance) and thicker than that of Guillemot, and it usually shows a prominently angled gonys. On our bird, the bill gradually tapers to a point, and is approximately equal to the loral distance. Further distinctions between the two species in breeding plumage are the sharply pointed, inverted V of white that extends from the upper breast towards the throat of Brünnich's. On Guillemot, this is usually rounded at the top, though some individuals can appear to have a pointed V at times. Going back to that pale bill-stripe, it is not uncommon for Guillemots to hold a sand-eel *Ammodytes* in their bill for long periods, sometimes 30 minutes or more. At a distance, this can give the impression of both a pale bill-stripe and a thicker bill profile.

This fine shot of a Guillemot was taken by Ed Mackrill at Flamborough Head, Humberside, in July 1982.

IAIN ROBERTSON

38. Mystery photograph 129. Identify the species. Answer next month



# Notes

## Occurrence of 'Russian' Bean Geese in Lancashire/Merseyside

The small flocks of Bean Geese *Anser fabalis* which winter in Britain consist of individuals of the long-billed nominate race *A. f. fabalis*, known as the 'Western' Bean Goose (Ogilvie 1978). Stragglers appearing in very small numbers with flocks of other goose species, in England principally White-fronted *A. albifrons*, include short-billed individuals with the characters of the so-called 'Russian' Bean Goose *A. f. rossicus* or intergrades (Cramp & Simmons 1977; Ogilvie 1978). The nominate race breeds in the boreal forest (taiga) zone of northern Europe to the Urals, while the race *rossicus* nests on the tundra of the USSR from Kanin to the Taymyr Peninsula. To the east, the former race gives way to *A. f. johanseni* and then *A. f. middendorffii*, which are both long-billed, while *rossicus* gives way to the heavier-billed race *A. f. serrirostris*; there is a broad zone of intergradation, especially in the western part of the distribution (Cramp & Simmons 1977).

Since intergrades occur in this, essentially clinal species, field identification of Bean Goose races may pose practical difficulties; Ogilvie (1978) urged birdwatchers to draw the bills and the extent of their orange and black markings in order to 'assemble knowledge on the range of variation of Bean Geese in given areas.' Published field characters and measurements (Cramp & Simmons 1977) suggest that, under good conditions, experienced observers may successfully distinguish between 'typical' individuals

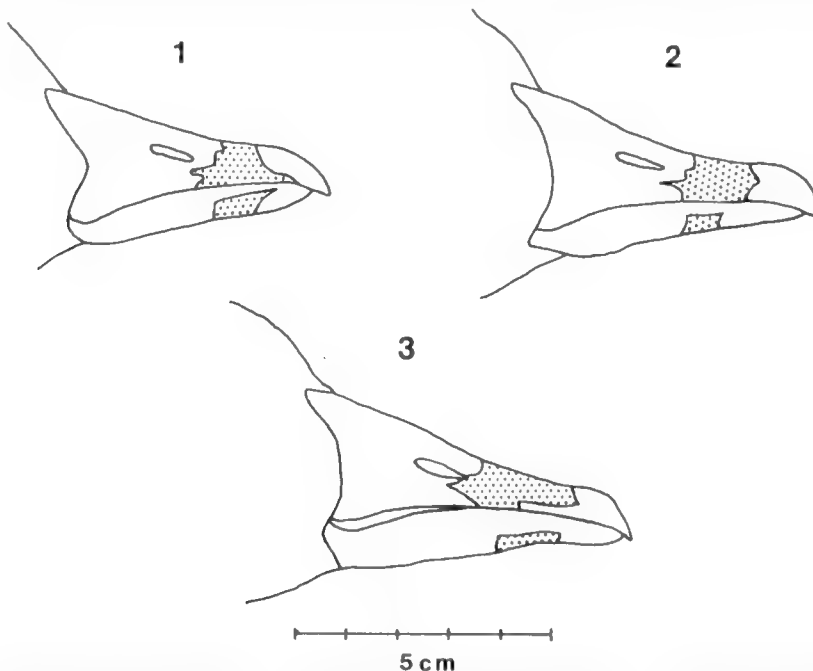
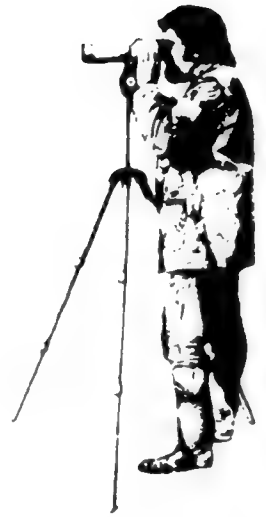


Fig. 1. Scale drawings of bills of three Bean Geese *Anser fabalis* shot Ribble estuary, Lancashire (see table 1). Stippling indicates extent of orange pigmentation. The typically convex lower mandible of the tundra-breeding races is apparent: 1 and 2 are of the race *rossicus*; 3 is closest to race *serrirostris* or an intergrade between *rossicus* and *serrirostris*

of *fabalis* and *rossicus*, the two races known to winter in Western Europe, especially when other geese are present for size comparison.

During the 11 winters 1975/76-1985/86, in Lancashire and north Merseyside, we recorded 91 Bean Geese which we could confidently ascribe to a subspecies or recognisable intergrade. These included four individuals shot by wildfowlers on the Ribble estuary in mistake for Pink-footed Geese *A. brachyrhynchus*, while all the others were observed at close range in flocks of Pink-footed Geese. Of the total of 91, 32 (35%) were ascribed to the race *fabalis*, 56 (61%) to the race *rossicus*, and three were regarded as of the race *serrirostris* or *rossicus/serrirostris* intergrades. The largest influx of Russian Bean Geese (22 sightings) occurred during the severe winter of 1981/82. The four shot geese were examined in fresh condition, three being measured using the criteria recommended by Cramp & Simmons (1977) (table 1, fig. 1). Three individuals (including the one not measured) are typical of the race *rossicus*; the fourth (specimen 3) is closest to *serrirostris* or an intergrade between *rossicus* and *serrirostris* (its measurements overlap with those of *rossicus*, the bill length being at the very upper end of the range for a male). We have not located any other British-taken specimens of Russian Bean Geese in museums, although our search was not exhaustive. Captive origin of these geese seems unlikely, and, incidentally, The Wildfowl Trust at Martin Mere, Lancashire, has reported no escapes during the period of the study.

Since 1970, when there were 25,000 Bean Geese wintering in the Netherlands, the numbers there have increased, the Russian form being commoner than the Western race in that country (van den Bergh 1985; Dr M. A. Ogilvie *in litt.*). In hard winters, even greater numbers of this species move westwards into the Netherlands, with no fewer than 144,000 in 1981/82, of which a maximum of 18,000 were labelled *fabalis* by the Dutch; it is possible that displacements from these flocks are responsible for the occurrences of Russian Bean Geese in northwest England. Circumstantial support for such movements is provided by the recovery on the Ribble

**Table 1. Measurements (mm) of three freshly dead Bean Geese *Anser fabalis*, shot Ribble estuary, Lancashire**

Methods used for measuring are those described by Cramp & Simmons (1977). See also fig. 1

	Specimen 1 (imm, 24 Oct 1981)	Specimen 2 (imm, 24 Oct 1981)	Specimen 3 (ad ♀, 8 Oct 1982)
Right-wing length	430	420 (outer tips damaged)	440
Left-wing length	430	450	444
Bill length	54	58	63
Bill depth (lower mandible)	8	10	9
Middle-toe length	78	79	80
Tarsus length	—	—	80
Tail	—	—	129
No. serrations on edge of upper mandible	21	21	21

estuary on 13th February 1982 of a Pink-footed Goose which had been ringed in Flevoland, Netherlands, on 8th January 1981. Although there have been recoveries of Icelandic-ringed Pink-feet in the Netherlands, it seems much more likely that this individual was from the Svalbard-breeding population, which winters on the Continent, separately from the Iceland and Greenland breeders that winter in Britain. This was the first Pink-foot ringed on the Continent to be recovered in Britain and Ireland, and it appeared soon after record numbers of this species (Forshaw 1983) and of Russian Bean Geese had been counted in Lancashire/Merseyside.

A Bean Goose showing the characters of the race *middendorffii* was observed in the Netherlands on 18th January 1982 (van den Bergh 1984). As long-distance vagrancy by wildfowl is well established, there seems no reason why occasional individuals of this race and also of *serrirostris* should not appear in Western Europe, including Britain.

We are grateful to C. R. Hodgson, Dr J. Kear, Dr M. Largen, D. K. Read and Dr P. E. Wheeler for information and ideas.

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**Mallards diving like sawbills in deep, fast-flowing water** On 16th April 1984, at Grantown-on-Spey, Highland, I was walking alongside the River Spey where a footpath follows the outside of a curve, so that the deepest and fastest part of the river is near to the opposite bank. About 75 m away, some ducks were bouncing in and out of the swiftest water. Expecting them to be sawbills *Mergus*, I approached, only to find that they were Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos*. Two individuals were diving, submerging totally; having been swept quickly downstream for some metres, they popped up, swam towards the bank and then worked their way upstream in the quiet water under the overhanging boughs, to begin another dive. This behaviour continued for maybe 20 minutes after I had first observed it. Three Mallards were resting: one on the bank itself, and two on the horizontal lower branches of the overhanging trees. ELSPETH BARTLETT

*1 Craigrory, North Kessock, Inverness IV1 1XH*

Dr M. A. Ogilvie has commented that this is 'quite common in still water when there is a good food source available (e.g. grain in ponds at Slimbridge)', but that he has not heard of it in fast-flowing water. We have previously published a note concerning Mallards diving to catch fish fry (*Brit. Birds* 70: 164). Eds

**Immature Mediterranean Gull 'playing' with stick** On 21st December 1984, at the Oued Sous estuary near Agadir, Morocco, I saw a first-winter Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* standing in shallow water

repeatedly pick up and drop a stick about 10 cm long; eventually it lost interest and resumed resting and feeding. Similar behaviour occurs in adult courtship (*BWP*, vol. 3), but I can find no reference to its being performed either by immatures or on wintering grounds.

A. G. DUFF

99 Willow Avenue, Huntington, New York, NY11743, USA

**Black-headed Gull dropping and re-catching circular object in air** On 11th November 1984, from the cliff-top path above Durdle Door, near Lulworth Cove, Dorset, I saw an adult Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* behaving unusually. From a height of about 250m, it was dropping a round, dark object seemingly no more than about 5cm in diameter, and then immediately diving and catching it before it had fallen more than 20-30m; it then climbed to its original position, dropped the object once more and, with wings drawn into its body like a gannet *Sula*, speedily dived after it and caught it again. I watched the gull through binoculars, and this entire process of drop-dive-and-catch was repeated another five or six times. Finally, the gull flew out of sight below the cliff. I was unable to identify the object, but it seems unlikely to have been a shellfish as the beach was of fine shingle that is pounded quite heavily by the sea; neither were there any rocks nearby that the gull may have used as an 'anvil', and no other gulls were involved. From the dexterity it displayed, the gull was no stranger to this activity. I can find no reference to this behaviour in the literature I have consulted.

COLIN GRAHAM

81 Marriott Street, Redfern, NSW 2016, Australia

**Hovering flight of Tawny Owl, and possible cause of increased mortality in cold weather** Hovering flight by the Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* has been recorded only infrequently. At 23.30 GMT on 8th February 1986, while driving along a country lane near Marshwood, Dorset, I came across a Tawny Owl standing facing me in the centre of the road. To avoid colliding with it, I was forced to slow down and, as I came to a halt, the owl took off to its left, turned through 180° and reached a position level with the front of, and about 3 m to the offside of, my vehicle. Just over 1 m above the verge, it started to hover with long, fast wingbeats, maintaining its position for about ten seconds; it then hovered while facing in the same direction as I was, but after a few seconds turned its head approximately 135° backwards to its left and looked at me, as if waiting for me to move so that it could return to its original position. I remained stationary and the owl described a leisurely arc in front of me and perched on a branch on the nearside hedge (there was no suitable perch on the offside hedge), from which positions we 'studied each other' for about two minutes; a vehicle then came from the opposite direction, I had to reverse, and the owl flew off.

At 18.45 GMT on 27th February 1986, driving along a country lane near Whitchurch Canonorum, Dorset, I again had to slow and stop to avoid colliding with a Tawny Owl standing facing me in the centre of

the road; the owl flew off. During the very cold month of February 1986, I also saw three roadside corpses of this species in far west Dorset.

Despite travelling the roads of Dorset for many thousands of hours, I have not previously seen Tawny Owls standing in the centre of the road, nor such frequency of road casualties of this species. I suspect that, during very cold spells, the owl may stand in the road at locations known to it as mammal runs, thereby increasing its chances of obtaining prey in the very difficult hunting conditions, but also increasing the risk of its becoming a road-accident victim.

ROBIN MASON

*Police House, Hill Road, Lyme Regis, Dorset DT7 3PG*

**Skylark singing close to hovering Kestrel** At about 15.30 GMT on 23rd April 1986, near Bishop's Lydeard, Taunton, Somerset, I saw a female Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* hovering about 10 m above an arable field, with a Skylark *Alauda arvensis* hovering and singing about 2 m above it. This continued for at least 30 seconds, before the lark rose higher, still singing, and the falcon moved off to hover at a different site over the field. Because of its relative position, the Skylark was apparently safe from attack by the Kestrel, which was presumably scanning the ground for prey.

A. P. RADFORD

*Crossways Cottage, West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset TA4 3EG*

Derek Goodwin has commented: 'In many birds, a *mild* degree of alarm seems often to elicit song.' The behaviour described may in fact be commonplace, even if not often reported. Eds

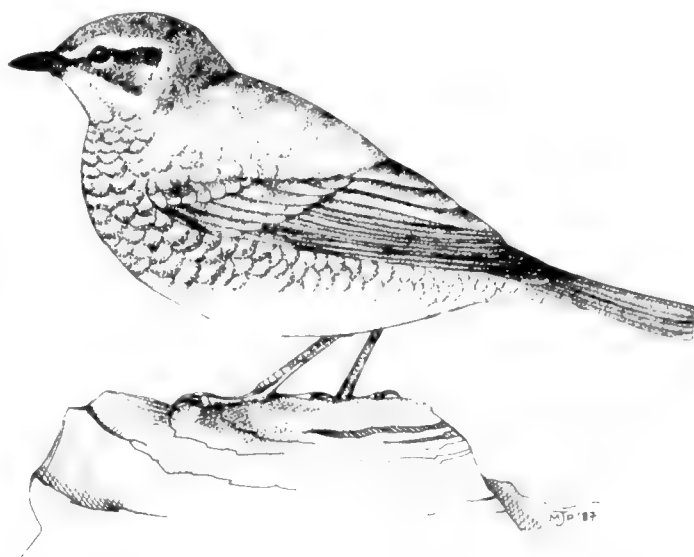
**Sand Martins apparently dusting** The editorial comment to a note by Michael Clegg on Sand Martins *Riparia riparia* feeding on the ground (*Brit. Birds* 77: 361) stated that, so far as is known, there are no other records of dusting by this species. On two occasions, I have observed Sand Martins apparently dusting: on 8th August 1979, on a gravel road at Stanton Harcourt Gravel-pits, Oxfordshire (75-100 individuals); and on 24th July 1982, on a metalled path dividing the two waters at Farmoor Reservoir, Oxfordshire (600-700 martins). Both parties were almost entirely of juveniles. On both occasions, the martins were lying on the ground with wings outspread, primarily as if sunning; they were making wriggling movements, sometimes pecking at the ground, sometimes preening vigorously. This gave the appearance of 'anting', but close examination of the ground afterwards gave no evidence of the presence of ants, nor of any item which might serve as food; I assumed that they might have been picking up grit, but cannot be sure. In all this activity, the martins made the dust fly. The dusting, however, appeared less deliberate than that of other passerines (e.g. House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*), and it is possible that it was incidental, although, considering how unfamiliar Sand Martins are with being on the ground, it would have been surprising had the activity been more extravagant.

JOHN BRUCKER

*65 Yarnton Road, Kidlington, Oxford OX5 1AT*

**Siberian Thrush in Co. Cork** At about 13.00 GMT on 18th October 1985, I was walking along the 'High Road' on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, when I noticed a thrush flying from a small bush into a grassy field. At first glance, I thought it was a Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, but it seemed too dark for that species and I then saw that it had a very conspicuous supercilium, recalling Redwing *T. iliacus*, but very heavy spotting on almost the entire underparts ruled out that species also. Puzzled, I tried to get closer, but disturbed the bird. When it flew, I was amazed to see white tips to the outer tail-feathers and a striking underwing pattern. For the next 30 minutes I took notes, and then returned to the bird observatory to inform the warden, Dave Borton, and to check the literature, which suggested that the bird was almost certainly an immature or female Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica*. I returned to the area with DB and Mike Pollard, and over the next 2½ hours we took detailed notes:

Fig. 1. Female Siberian Thrush  
*Zoothera sibirica*, Co. Cork,  
October 1985 (Mike Pollard)



**SIZE** About same as Song Thrush.

**HEAD** Broad creamy supercilium extended from base of bill to just before nape, where it curved sharply downwards; very pale brown at base of bill, becoming light creamy colour above and behind eye, where most obvious. Very dark brown crown and dark brown ear-coverts. Lower ear-coverts paler and greyer, with dark brown flecking. Nape slightly paler than crown, more olive-brown. Pale narrow, off-white eye-ring, less obvious above eye, where it merged with supercilium. Lores dark brown. Very conspicuous, creamy sub-moustachial stripe bordered below by dark brown malar stripe.

**UPPERPARTS** Mantle dark olive-brown similar to that of Redwing, contrasting quite markedly with rump, which distinctly grey-toned.

**WINGS** Upperwing dark brown, with very obvious warm rufous tone to most feathers. Primary tips and tips of primary coverts dark chocolate-brown. Two conspicuous pale wing-bars, formed by pale buff tips to greater

and median coverts. Striking underwing pattern: broad, buffish band running full length of wing contrasting with otherwise dark brown underwing, very eye-catching when bird in flight. Upperwing also appeared to have this pattern, but to much lesser degree.

**TAIL** Dark olive-brown with white tips to outer tail-feathers. White tips visible only in flight, when very obvious.

**UNDERPARTS** Strong orange-buff wash on upper breast faded quickly to off-white on lower breast and more greyish-white on flanks, becoming almost pure white on belly. Ventral area and undertail-coverts off-white. Whole of breast had dark brown crescentic markings with dark brown spotting on ventral area, undertail-coverts and sides of neck. Some indistinct brown streaking on flanks. Belly unmarked.

**BARE PARTS** Bill similar in size to that of Song Thrush: dark brown, slightly paler on lower mandible; rather yellowish at base. Eyes





39. Female Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica*, Co. Cork, October 1985 (M. O'Donnell)

dark brown/black. Legs strikingly pale pinkish-orange, appearing slightly longer than those of Song Thrush.

**BEHAVIOUR** Very like Song Thrush in all respects, feeding in open for almost the whole period of observation. When alarmed, would fly into bushes, but return to open after about ten minutes. Hopped rapidly across ground,

holding body horizontal, but appearing to arch back at same time, giving it hunch-backed appearance. When it stopped, had head cocked to one side in same manner as Song Thrush. It ate several earthworms and blackberries, which it swallowed whole.

**VOICE** Call similar to that of Song Thrush: a short 'Zit', but softer and heard only rarely.

This record has been accepted as the first for Ireland by the Irish Rare Birds Committee (*Irish Birds* 3: 273-286, 322). It is the fifth for Britain and Ireland combined, the previous four all being adult males: on the Isle of May, Fife, during 2nd-4th October 1954 (*Brit. Birds* 48: 21-24), in Hampshire on 28th December 1976 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 121-122), in Norfolk on 25th December 1977 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 122-123), and in Orkney on 13th November 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 78: 573). In his assessment of this record for the IRBC, Phil Round stated (*in litt.*) that, in his experience of the species in Thailand, the downward curve of the supercilium around the rear of the ear-coverts is an important feature. The very pale, pinkish-orange colour of the legs—a feature which I found very prominent—has been noted by Jepson (1985) and Sharrock (1985) as being characteristic of Siberian Thrush. An observer faced with a possible Siberian Thrush should not have any great problem: the distinctive shape of the supercilium, the crescentic markings on the breast, the striking colour of the legs, and, while in flight, the underwing pattern and white tips to the outer tail-feathers should all help to clinch the identification.

MICHAEL O'DONNELL

2 Alden Road, Verbena Estate, Sutton, Dublin 13, Ireland

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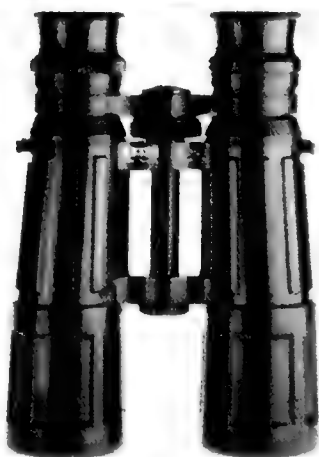
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# PhotoSpot

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## 25. Black Vulture

When seen at a moderate distance in the field, the Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus* is just a 'very big and very black' vulture. When viewed closer, however, one sees that its facial features are unique and, to my mind, resemble the mask of a clown. This individual was photographed in the southern Arava in Israel, from a hide 3.5 m away from a carcass on which it was dining.

The bird in the photograph is young, as shown by the pink at the base of the bill, the fleshy orbital ring, and the exposed skin on its nape and legs. On adults, these bare-parts are greyish-blue. Young Black Vultures usually have uniformly dark underwing-coverts which contrast with the lighter remiges. Adults also have light grey spots on their underwing-coverts.

In flight, the body structure and wings appear large and bulky, but the flight is easy and impressive: the wings appear rectangular, the tail short, and the head prominent. The wings are held in line with the body, unlike Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*, which raises its wings in a 'V'.

The Black Vulture breeds in Europe and southern Asia and winters in small numbers south of its breeding areas. In Israel, it is a very rare migrant and an occasional winterer, but has been known to breed in northern Israel in the past. The southern Arava in Israel is one of the few, if not the only, places where Black Vulture can be seen sharing a carcass with Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus* (see PhotoSpot in a future issue of *BB*).

40. Juvenile Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus*, Israel, November 1986 (*H. Shirihai*)



This PhotoSpot is dedicated to Paul Doherty in thanks for his help and encouragement in teaching me photography, and for the great photographs which he has produced for the International Birdwatching Centre in Eilat.

HADORAM SHIRIHAI

PO Box 774, Eilat 88100, Israel

41. Black Vulture *Aegyptus monachus*, Israel, November 1986 (H. Shirihai)



## Seventy-five years ago...

---

'On December 13th, 1912, my brother shot a Curlew-Sandpiper (*Erolia ferruginea*) at Cairness, Aberdeenshire. I saw the bird half an hour after it was dead, and was able to identify it. My brother thought it was a Dunlin, but I directly noticed the white rump and tail-coverts, and the slightly longer and more curved bill, being well acquainted with Curlew-Sandpipers, having kept them as pets in my smoking-room.' (*Brit. Birds* 6: 281, February 1913)

## Letters

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**Field identification of black-headed Yellow Wagtails** When discussing races of the Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*, Martin van den Berg and Gerald Oreel (*Brit. Birds* 78: 176-183) claimed that 'most records of *feldegg* in western Europe probably result from confusion with the grey-headed race *thunbergi*.' The Swedish records (13 to date) are mentioned among the unreliable. The reasons for their doubts were (1) that British and Dutch record descriptions did not convincingly exclude the race *thunbergi*, and (2) that the timing of the records in Belgium, Britain, the Netherlands and Sweden largely concurred with the spring migration of *thunbergi* instead of an expected somewhat earlier pattern, in '(March) and April' rather than in May and June.

I will speak only for the Swedish records. Eleven of the 13 records have been examined by the national rarities committee. The majority of the submitted descriptions have been sufficiently detailed and relevant to eliminate dark *thunbergi*, and, in a couple of records, photographic evidence conclusively shows adult males of *feldegg*. It is true that the Swedish records have been made between 5th and 24th May, with a peak in mid May, but the same pattern is found for the Swedish records of British Yellow Wagtails of the subspecies *flavissima* (at least 13 records of males; a few breeding records on the south and west coasts; May-early June); if these have been misidentified too, with what have we confused them? I think that not only do we but also people abroad have to accept that *Motacilla f. flava* returns to Sweden in early May, that the grey-headed race *thunbergi* passes through south Sweden during about 5th-20th May, and that vagrant *flavissima* and *feldegg* occur at the same time. The weather in April in Sweden is not suitable for the Yellow Wagtail, regardless of subspecies—it is simply too early.

I disagree with van den Berg & Oreel that males of *feldegg* and *thunbergi* can be very similar to the point of confusion. We are talking about field



identification of subspecies, always requiring close, good views. With this kept in mind, I cannot see how a good *feldegg*, with its completely glossy black head and a distinct demarcation to the green mantle, and only a little green (never grey) admixed in the black nape in fresh plumage on some, could be confused with a *thunbergi*, which is always grey on the nape down to the mantle, and a little darker grey on the crown, not black. Only some very worn late June individuals (towards the end of their breeding season) become dark grey all over the crown and nape and blackish on the ear-coverts, but they are still neither glossy nor black. Dark-headed Yellow Wagtails in May or early June on spring migration or shortly afterwards should never present a problem. If Sammalisto found three black-headed birds in Finland in 1955-80, as quoted in van den Berg & Oreel, I suggest that he found three genuine *feldegg*, rather than three aberrant *thunbergi*.

Birds which are not good, clean *feldegg* but are showing traces of intergradation with *flava*, *cinereocapilla* or even *beema* might be much more similar to *thunbergi* and problematic to identify with certainty. But who expected anything else? (And this brings us outside the issue brought up by van den Berg & Oreel.)

LARS SVENSSON

*Sturegatan 60, S-114 36 Stockholm, Sweden*

Martin van den Berg and Gerald J. Oreel have commented as follows: 'We cannot accept Lars Svensson's view on the identification of *feldegg*. In an attempt to simplify this problem, he just denies the incidence of black-headed variants in the *thunbergi* population. This is at complete variance with the results of previous studies on this subject (including those by Sammalisto). Svensson's suggestion that the three black-headed *thunbergi* studied by Sammalisto in Finland were in fact *feldegg* is without foundation. We remain of the opinion, therefore, that extralimital *feldegg* can safely be identified only by using a combination of features (including the call note). If Svensson's oversimplified view has been prevalent in the Swedish rarities committee, then its apparently high acceptance rate of *feldegg* records is, at least partly, explained.

'When discussing the temporal distribution of *feldegg* records in western Europe, we did not claim that all May-June records were the result of confusion with *thunbergi*. We argued only that the observed vagrancy pattern did not agree with the expected one (the majority—but not all—being adult males in April, which, as pointed out by us, return well before the other age and sex categories, whose identification was not dealt with in our paper). At least some of the post-April claims of adult male *feldegg* may be genuine.' Eds

**Crown colour of White-crowned Black Wheatear** The occurrence of the White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* in Suffolk (*Brit. Birds* 79: 221-227) recalls a brief study of *O. l. ernesti* made during an expedition to Jordan in 1963. This race was common in the Wadi Rum area, nesting in the crevices of the high jebels. Of 13 breeding adults, only three had white crowns, or indeed any trace of white on the head. In view of this curious ratio, it would be interesting to know whether the species is truly dimorphic or whether perhaps the white crown is acquired only after the second or third moult. The birds in Jordan showed a smaller area of white on the tail than those of the nominate race in North Africa. A feature not mentioned in B. J. Brown's article, nor apparent in the illustrations, is that this species has a very noticeably large head, which at a distance easily distinguishes it from other wheatears. The two illustrations of *O. l. ernesti* on pages 77 and 140 in my *Portrait of a Desert* (Collins 1964) show this clearly and also the



stouter and longer bill of this race to which B. J. Brown refers. The small bill of the bird in his pictures convinces me that the Suffolk record is of the nominate race.

GUY MOUNTFORT

*Hurst Oak, Sandy Lane, Lyndhurst, Hampshire SO4 7DN*

Peter Clement has commented: 'This is an interesting contribution on a rather controversial and still unsettled aspect of wheatear plumage. There are those who say that the species is dimorphic, and others that black crowns are only transient, all individuals ultimately becoming white-crowned. I have looked at evidence from studies made in Saudi Arabia supporting the latter view, but I am unconvinced. I have seen skins of black-crowned adults, and Mr Mountfort's letter is ample testimony to the fact that there is considerable evidence concerning breeding birds with black and with white crowns, in both like and unlike pairings. In a family of birds noted for its unstable gene-flow and dimorphic (or even polymorphic) plumages, I see no reason why black-crowned birds should not reach maturity, retaining their black crowns throughout adult life.' EDS

## Announcements

**Do you get your 'BB' late?** If so, it is not our fault. With the exception every year of the January issue, copies of *BB* are despatched on the last Thursday of the month preceding the cover date (e.g. this February issue will have been despatched on 28th January). If your copy arrives late, the delay was in the post. Only once in the past ten years has *BB* been despatched late (and that was due to a printing error which had to be corrected, and the issue was only two days late). We have, however, recently received complaints of late delivery in Sweden and in Finland, and there are periodic complaints in various regions of Britain. If you have been affected: sorry. There's nothing we can do. Please complain to your own local post office: this may have an effect.

**New books in British BirdShop** In addition to the continuing special offers concerning

'BWP' vols. I-V

The 'British Birds' Christopher Helm collection

the following books have been added to the British BirdShop list this month:

Maclean *Ducks of Sub-Saharan Africa*

Polking *Nature Photography Yearbook 1987-88*

Pyle, Howell, Yunick & DeSante *Identification Guide to North American Passerines*

These can be obtained POST FREE through British BirdShop. Please use the order forms on pages xiii and xiv.

## Reviews

**Where to Watch Birds in East Anglia.** By Peter Clarke and Margaret Clarke. Christopher Helm, London, 1987. 262 pages; 16 black-and-white plates; 40 line-drawings; 41 maps. Paperback £8.95.

This book is a guide to the birds and their habitats of the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire. Peter and Margaret Clarke have combined their own extensive knowledge, gained from a lifetime's birdwatching, mainly in Norfolk, with both published and privately provided information from a wide variety of sources, to produce an excellent and very readable guide to the region's avifauna.

Each county is divided into areas (Norfolk six, Suffolk six, Essex nine and Cambridge five). These are illustrated with maps and then information is provided under the headings 'Habitat', 'Species', 'Timing', 'Access' and 'Calendar'.

It is the extensive and very readable habitat accounts which make this book far more than a simple account of what birds to find where. The authors have given a fascinating and thoroughly absorbing account of the history and changes that have occurred in recent years.

clearly showing the need to conserve and manage the habitats that have survived urban and agricultural developments. The habitat sections may cause even the most experienced birder to pick up an unfamiliar field guide—one of the British Floras and Faunas—as many species of plants and animals peculiar to particular habitats are mentioned, often with an account of their status.

The species sections do not cover universally common species, except where large numbers may be seen on migration or in large flocks in winter quarters. Each area's special species are well described and many references are given to rare and semi-rare species that have occurred in the past, and that may reappear. These often lengthy descriptive passages are complemented by the 'Calendar' sections and, further, by the county check lists to be found in the appendix.

The 'Timing' sections are brief, and give a comment about seasons and favourable weather conditions. They also give an indication of the best tides and times of day, where these are important.

The 'Access' sections describe accurately a route to the birding area from the nearest town, but do not give details of internal layout of paths and hides at reserves because most reserves are so well organised in this respect nowadays.

The 'Calendar' sections are basic lists of resident species and separate lists of species likely to be encountered in each area in each season.

There are useful appendices listing organisations, reserves, some additional sites, birdwatchers' code of conduct, a further reading list, and the county check lists, with Huntingdonshire and Peterborough listed separately.

The book is illustrated with maps, black-and-white photographs, and 40 vignettes by Alan Wood, which are reminiscent of the work of Richard Richardson, to whose memory Peter and Margaret Clarke dedicate this very enjoyable and useful book.

ANDY LOWE

**Les Oiseaux de France en Concert. vol. 1. J'écoute vivre . . . Le Marais, L'Etang. vol. 1. Le Chant de Nos Oiseaux. vols. 1-3. Book cassettes by Daniel J. Pernin. 80FF; 85FF; 80FF; 85FF; 85FF.**

Since April 1986, Daniel Pernin has produced his first seven cassettes of bird songs and calls. These are five of them. *Les Oiseaux de France en Concert* is a straightforward sound picture of a Grey Heron colony and its surrounds, followed by a long sequence of singing Garden Warbler with a Blackcap coming in very briefly at the end. Side 2 continues the useful comparison between the two warblers, with Blackcap to the fore, singing both ecstatic and non-ecstatic song, and Garden Warbler performing nearby; this is followed by 3½ minutes of superb song plus calls of Golden Orioles with a varied background chorus. There are no announcements, and each side lasts about 13 minutes.

*J'écoute vivre . . .* is a series presenting bird sounds of different habitats. This first volume, covering wetlands, lasts about 15 minutes per side. Again there are no announcements, but, as with the previous tape, sequence of recordings is listed (French names only) on the back cover of the cassette 'book'. This tape, most of it recorded in east-central France, provides a nice atmospheric half-hour. The mixed colony of Night Herons and Little Egrets with young—you can almost 'feel' the stench—is well worth a listen for the 'behavioural noises' of the birds. Perhaps the main value is the songs of Bluethroat and of wetland warblers—Cetti's, Grasshopper, Savi's, Reed, Great Reed, Sedge and Marsh, the last-named with an excellent three minutes' worth of marvellous and varied mimicry. The general quality throughout is excellent, with adequate time devoted to each individual recording, all of which are admirably clear.

The series *Le Chant de Nos Oiseaux* presents the songs of passerines likely to be heard in France (and, of course, in many other European countries). Volumes 1-3 cover 56 species (17 warblers) in a total running time of about 90 minutes, thus giving lengthy sequences for each species; many calls, of various types, are also included, making this a particularly useful series. The author states that this series was conceived to enable the beginner to learn progressively—and I think he has succeeded. Of especial interest are the French 'dialects' of Great Tit (vol. 1) and of Goldcrest (vol. 3), and I like the way that immediate comparisons are made between, for example, Wood and Bonelli's Warblers, Pied and Collared Flycatchers, and Treecreeper and Short-toed Treecreeper (all vol. 3). The clarity of

recordings is first-rate and the arrangement is sensible and helpful. Each individual recording is preceded by a simple species-name announcement (in French: if in doubt, refer to Peterson *et al.*'s field guide). These tapes are well worth hearing—for pleasure, or to refresh the memory; and anybody contemplating a trip to France (always to be recommended!) and needing to acquaint himself/herself with the voices of, say, Orphean Warbler, Melodious Warbler or Ortolan Bunting would profit from obtaining a set.

DAVID A. CHRISTIE

**Ducks of Sub-Saharan Africa.** By Gordon Lindsay Maclean. Illustrations by Gail Darroll. Acorn Books, Randberg, South Africa, 1986. xvi + 150 pages; 26 colour plates; many line-drawings. Standard edition £65; collectors' edition £200.

Dimensions of 17" × 13" (43 × 33 cm) give the exquisite paintings of Gail Darroll as handsome a setting as they deserve. Each of the southern African species of wildfowl is illustrated, both sexes where different and in some cases also the downy young, swimming or standing among rushes, water-lilies, or other typical vegetation. Though slightly old-fashioned in design, being roughly oval with generous white margins, the effect is extremely pleasing, while the technical expertise shown in the meticulous representation of feather and down is great, indeed. Just occasionally, I felt that brighter colours were needed, for example on the males of Pintail, Shoveler and Garganey, but the colouring of most species is true to life.

The text is thoroughly researched and competently written, essays of up to 2,000 words covering description, derivation of name, range (with a clear map), biology, behaviour, and so on. The author has perhaps failed in his stated aim of producing 'lyrical and evocative . . . words to match the emotion of the colours of the paintings', though he does say what a hard task that would be. Nor does he really bring the birds alive to the reader. But, with paintings as beautiful as these, that matters not at all.

Charming line-drawings are also scattered through the book—a quality production of which the publishers, Acorn Books, and the South African printers, can be justly proud.

M. A. OGILVIE

**A Field Guide to the Birds of Hawaii and the Tropical Pacific.** By H. Douglas Pratt, Phillip L. Bruner, and Delwyn G. Berrett. Illustrated by H. Douglas Pratt. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1987. 409 pages; 45 colour plates; 5 black-and-white plates; 42 line-drawings. Hardback £33.50; paperback £13.30.

This is the first book to cover all the birds of the vast area of tropical Polynesia, with the entire Hawaiian archipelago, Micronesia and Fiji. All species which regularly occur (or which did occur) receive detailed treatment; rarities are covered briefly, with adequate references to more detailed texts; an appendix deals with hypothetical, enigmatic and temporarily established species (exotics) which cannot unequivocally be included in the islands' avifauna.

The book comprises four interrelated parts: an introductory section devoted to birding techniques in general, and in the tropical Pacific in particular; colour plates with accompanying thumb-nail notes; species accounts; and appendices including regional checklists, maps and a glossary. An extensive bibliography is included, and the index doubles as a checklist. Species accounts are detailed with sections on appearance, habits, voice, identification, occurrence, references, other names and extremely useful taxonomic 'signpost notes' where appropriate.

The myriad nature of the region creates particular difficulties for the reader unfamiliar with its geography, but they have been anticipated. Regional checklists, detailing the status of each species on all main islands, are presented for the Hawaiian islands, Micronesia, central Pacific islands, central Polynesia, southeastern Polynesia and Fiji. The complementary series of eight regional maps enables the reader to locate all islands mentioned in the text with ease. The introductory sections fully explain general issues relevant to visitors to the region: continental versus oceanic islands, kinds of oceanic islands, tropical Pacific habitats, island birding, and, most importantly, conservation.

The plates are superb and depict plumage variations where necessary. Of particular interest is the collection of illustrations of the famous and fantastic Hawaiian honeycreepers (Drepanidinae), widely known to biologists as an example of adaptive radiation. Despite their fame, I do not know of another easily obtainable collection of illustrations of this group in a single volume. Here we find them all, presented on just three plates for wonderment and ease of comparison. Prospective visitors have a grim shock in store: 15 of Hawaii's endemics are extinct, and the majority of those remaining are endangered.

This book is a brilliantly cohesive presentation of the birdlife of Earth's most disparate region, and I find it impossible to propose a significant criticism. It represents a landmark in the development of ornithology, and a revolution in the prospects for Pacific-island conservation. It will assist the effort to banish the spectre of extinction by raising public interest. As the populations of many of the region's remarkable species continue to dwindle, let us hope its arrival is not too late.

ROD MARTINS

**Foraging Theory.** By David W. Stephens and John R. Krebs. Princeton University Press, 1987. 247 pages. Hardback £26.70, paperback £9.70.

Studies of bird behaviour have changed over the last decade. The old approach was to describe everything—diet, habitat, courtship or even the scratching behaviour—in as much detail as possible. The modern approach takes an evolutionary perspective and asks *why* animals have evolved the behaviour they possess.

One of the many productive consequences of this new perspective is an approach, known as optimal foraging theory, which looks at the costs and benefits of the decisions made by animals. For example, we now understand why animals choose certain food items, why they prefer one location to another, and why they bring selected items back to the nest. As a result, we have gained a deeper insight into the behaviour of the many organisms studied; these include herons, Tufted Ducks, Redshanks, Oystercatchers, Great Tits, starlings, humming-birds, wheatears, swallows, university students and Cree Indians.

This book is excellent, but very esoteric. Practically the entire book is devoted to theory and mathematical gymnastics, with most of the descriptions of the field studies relegated to one table. I suspect this book will not find its way into many *Barbour* jackets or onto many birdwatchers' bookshelves.

W. J. SUTHERLAND

## News and comment

*Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch*

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

**LIPU Giovani** With the aid of a grant of £20,000 from the RSPB Chelmsford Members' Group, the Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli (LIPU, the Italian equivalent of the RSPB) has established a junior branch: LIPU Giovani. The aim is to establish a membership of 7,000 in the first year, and reports to hand indicate that they are well on target; one of several incentives to membership is the journal *Il Falchetto* (The Hobby), which is based on the RSPB's award-winning YOC journal *Bird Life*. In the face of many difficulties, LIPU is forging ahead with a great many imaginative initia-

tives in the long uphill struggle to get wildlife conservation (and indeed an understanding of wildlife generally) accepted in Italy. We wish LIPU Giovani well.

**A good name** Whilst visiting LIPU recently, ME was obliged to learn some Italian bird names to facilitate conversation, and was struck—not for the first time—by the appropriateness of some foreign bird names. The Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*, for example, is Codirosso Spazzacamino—the Red-tailed Chimneysweep.

**Protection for Tarifa Beach, Spain** Tarifa is the southernmost point of mainland Europe, at the centre of the Strait of Gibraltar. Its strategic position for migrants is well known, not least to the hunters who traditionally set clap-nets in the scrub and sand-dunes along the shore of La Playa de Los Lances, the fine Atlantic beach west of the town. These nets are reliably estimated to have been taking an annual toll of half-a-million passerines, mainly finches.

Pressure from local ornithologists and conservation organisations recently encouraged the local Council, which owns the land, to declare it a reserve, with hunting to be prohibited forthwith. This declaration, on 17th September 1987, provoked an uproar among the hunters who eventually succeeded in forcing a concession, whereby 40 nets are to be permitted daily during the hunting season. This compares with the 300 nets usually operated there. The Council insists that this is a temporary measure and that hunting will be banned there totally soon. Numerous telegrams from all over Spain, and elsewhere, have been sent to the Mayor, to express support for what has been a very courageous step in the face of threats from the aggrieved hunters. Letters from overseas carry added weight and British ornithologists are requested to help by writing to the Mayor and expressing approval and encouragement for the designation of Los Lances as a reserve. The address is Sr Alcalde de Tarifa, Antonio Ruiz Jimenez, Tarifa, Cadiz, Spain.

The ornithological importance of the proposed reserve is undeniable. Its 118 hectares boast a list of 215 species. Large numbers of gulls and waders regularly rest on the beach, the former including numbers of Audouin's Gulls in late summer and autumn, and Lesser Crested Terns are annual there. Thousands of storks, raptors and passerines overfly the reserve and many of these stop and rest there. The beach itself is unspoilt, and designation as a reserve may help to protect it from the sort of development which has ravaged the nearby Costa del Sol. The reserve is open to public access and anyone birding in Southern Spain is strongly advised to visit it. (*Contributed by Ernest Garcia*)

**Two new SPAs** Many would argue that successive British governments have been lamentably slow in bringing about formal recognition and better protection for many

of our most outstanding wetlands and estuarine sites, even with the total (in November 1987) standing at 31 sites classified under the Ramsar Convention and 22 notified as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the 1979 European Community Birds Directive. It was, therefore, a timely move by the present government when they announced SPA status for two vitally important areas—Chichester and Langstone Harbours—towards the end of October 1987. We gather that several other sites are under consideration for classification—at a time when estuaries are under threat as never before. Let's hope for some more good news—soon.

**The Flows again** The arguments over the future of the Flow Country of Caithness and Sutherland continue. The Highlands and Islands Development Board has now entered the fray, suggesting that, were the Nature Conservancy Council's recommendation, concerning a cessation of planting, to be adopted, Caithness and Sutherland would stand to lose 200 jobs and some two million pounds in wages per annum, and suffer widespread falls in land values. The HIDB advocates partial, selective planting instead of a total ban—more or less maintaining the *status quo*, with some additional planting. The NCC has outlined the uniqueness of this vast area of bog (and its international importance for birds) and, in effect, has said that much of it has been ruined already; likewise, the RSPB has said 'Enough is enough', and, in addition to making a strong case for the area's avifauna, has demonstrated the many flaws in the economics of the whole forestry operation and pointed to the fact that it is actually the taxpayer who is bearing the brunt of the costs, while a few people get rich quick and move on. The whole sorry saga of the Flows is one of the nastiest stories of environmental rape of our times—and it is not over yet. While we respect HIDB's real concern for the livelihood of the local people, we would suggest that there are other ways of helping them which would not involve the wholesale and wanton destruction of a unique and irreplaceable wildlife area. Forestry is not the only answer.

**Belvide** Belvide Reservoir is justly renowned as one of the best and most valuable bird sites in the West Midlands. David Smallshire has now brought together a

wealth of data on this site in his *Belvide Bird Reserve—a natural history*, published by the West Midland Bird Club. It is available for £5.50 (incl. p & p)—cheques payable to West Midland Bird Club, please—from Aquila (WMBC), Haydon House, Alcester Road, Studley, Warwickshire B80 7AN.

**Siberian write-up** The growing numbers of *BB* readers who are interested in Siberia and its birds might like to know of a report on the summer 1987 Finnish expedition to Kazakhstan, Tadzikistan and Siberia. It includes information on a 'new' area for western birders—Karaganda—a mouth-watering bird list and several locality sketch-maps. Petri Hottola will be glad to send you a copy if you write to him at Puronsuunkatu 4 A 1, SF-80160 Joensuu, Finland. The price is 25 Finnish Marks (28 if you live outside Europe): your bank will advise you how to pay this—payment should be made to the Union Bank of Finland, account no 231920 7342.

**Rutledge House** The Irish Wildbird Conservancy has moved from Co. Wicklow to Co. Dublin. The new headquarters has been named Rutledge House, in honour of the IWC's first President, Major R. F. Rutledge. The new address is Irish Wildbird Conservancy, Rutledge House, 8 Longford Place, Monkstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland; telephone Dublin (01) 804322.

**Swanwick yet again** The traditional December BTO Conference was held at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire, during 4th-6th December 1987. Some birdwatchers are conference-goers, whereas others hardly ever (or never) attend such events. Those who fail to do so are missing the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas in relaxed surroundings: how many expeditions, projects, co-operative research and new lines of thinking have originated over a pint of beer or a cup of coffee at a conference? That is the main reason for going, but there are often some very good lectures, which the regular conference-goer probably regards as a bonus.

This year's highlights were—for me—Dr Tim Birkhead's 'The Black and White Minstrels: sex and violence among Magpies [*Pica pica*]' and the carefully argued predictions by Bob Furness in 'Seabirds and fisheries: an ecological time bomb'.

The latter foresaw dramatic declines of some North Atlantic seabirds as a result of changing commercial fishing practice, which may lead to the present artificially high populations crashing as stocks of their food (such as sand-eels) are reduced by an increase in larger predatory fish (which have been over-exploited) and by harvesting of these previously almost untouched stocks for fishmeal.

One of the longest and most enthusiastic bouts of clapping ever heard at a Swanwick conference accompanied the presentation to Trevor and Anna Poyser of the Jubilee Medal, for the services which their publishing house, T. & A. D. Poyser Ltd, has given to the Trust.

The *British Birds* mystery photographs competition attracted 98 entries, of which none was wholly correct, the two best (with five out of six species correctly identified) being from Andy Lowe and Robin Prytherch; our new Editorial Board member, Robin, won the draw and was presented with the traditional bottle of champagne by Erika Sharrock.

Other identification competitions included one featuring skins (and the odd wing or other appendage) from the British Museum (Nat. Hist.) at Tring. This test attracted a great deal of attention, as did the original such 'Grisly Competition' at the Joint BB/BTO Conference in April 1987. The April competition was won by John Mather (*Brit. Birds* 80: 340), a former member of the *BB* Rarities Committee and now Chairman of the BOU Records Committee; this December competition was won by Brian Little, another former member of the *BB* Rarities Committee, and currently Hon. Secretary of the BOU Records Committee. Clearly, the right people are in charge at the top! The runners-up this time were Dave Smallshire and (with his second entry—is that legal?) Roger Tidman. An even more difficult competition involved identifying the remains of birds dissected from Hen Harrier pellets. Only nine people got so far as submitting entries for this, the joint winners being Dr Edmund Fellowes, D. Jardine (who won the draw), John Marchant and Bob Scott.

All those who attended this excellent conference owe thanks to Audrey Causer and Tim Davis of the British Trust for Ornithology and the staff at the Hayes Conference Centre, who ensured that everything happened exactly as and when it should. (JTRS)



42. Swift *Apus apus*, Lincolnshire, June 1987 (Keith Atkin)

**The incredible Swift** It is said that a decapitated chicken will continue to run around in circles. Apparently, a headless Swift *Apus apus* can still fly in a straight line (plate 42). As Michael Caine would say, 'Not a lot of people know that.' (Contributed by Keith Atkin)

**As protected as a newt** Congratulations to the major building company, *Persimmon Homes*, which responded positively to the news that ponds on a housing development area near Peterborough were breeding sites for great crested newts *Triturus cristatus*. Not only has *Persimmon Homes* left the cluster of ponds intact, but, in response to a NCC recommendation, has given them to the Beds & Hunts Wildlife Trust as a reserve, and also built special 'newt tunnels' under an access road, along the lines of those sometimes provided for toads *Bufo* or badgers *Meles meles*.

**Birds of inland waterways** The joint IWC/BTO conference held at Dundrum, Co. Tipperary, from 6th-8th November 1987 was devoted to this theme. The talks ranged from general discussions on the value of the Shannon river system and its importance for a wide variety of both breeding and wintering species, to the specific problems facing breeding Common Scoters *Melanitta nigra* in Ireland. The rapid spread of feral minks *Mustela vison* would appear to be seriously endangering the remaining scoter populations.

Few people can have had their conservation dream come true, but Margaret Ridgeway must be particularly satisfied

with the results of her efforts, and those of her late husband, in turning Kilcolman Wildfowl Refuge into the thriving haven it is today; her determination to succeed is an object lesson for us all.

The bravest speaker must have been Dr Douglas Butler, chairman of the Irish National Association of Regional Game Councils, who earned respect for the open and forthright manner in which he tackled the conflict between shooting interests and birdwatchers; often these presentations are so full of platitudes about compromise and tolerance that the real problems are not voiced. Dr Butler's talk, and the subsequent questioning, however, ensured that peoples' true feelings were made known, particularly in regard to the vexed issue of 'tourist shooting'.

The *British Birds* mystery photographs competition was won by Chris Murphy from the RSPB's Northern Ireland office. (MB)

**'Seabirds at Sea'** Two important new publications are now available, both from the Interpretive (sic) Services Branch, Dept PR, Nature Conservancy Council, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA; both are post free: *Vulnerable concentrations of Seabirds in the North Sea* costs £5 and *Seabirds in the North Sea* £12. These detail the findings of the 'Seabirds at Sea' team, whose work took them over 124,000 km (equivalent to sailing around the world three times), took seven years and involved counting some 1½ million birds. The reports show that about 4¼ million seabirds breed on the coasts of the North Sea, with the most important colonies vulnerable to oil and chemical pollution



centred on the coasts of mainland Scotland and the Northern Isles; they show, too, that auks always feed within 32 km of their colonies in the breeding season, but range much more widely at other times. It is concluded, too, that a pollution incident more than 32 km offshore would not be catastrophic during the breeding season, but could of course be so at other times — such as during August, when large numbers of mainly flightless auks gather in the North Sea off northeastern Scotland.

**Field Studies Council** The FSC runs a wide range of wildlife courses at its nine field centres. If any *BB* reader would like to obtain details, they should write to the Field Studies Council at Montford Bridge, Shrewsbury SY4 1HW.

**Change of Recorder** Eric W. E. Maughan has taken over from Sinclair Manson as County Recorder for Caithness: Eric's address is 'Burnside', Harbour Road, Reay, Thurso, Caithness KW14 7RG.



## October reports

*Ian Dawson and Keith Allsopp*

**These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records.  
Unless otherwise stated, dates refer to October 1987.**

*In the first week, an anticyclone stayed close by over the Continent, bringing warm east to southeast winds. As the centre of pressure moved eastwards, the weather became cyclonic, and wet westerlies arrived on 7th. A series of weather fronts trailed across the Atlantic and an instability in one of these on 15th developed rapidly into a very deep low over the Bay of Biscay. This small but intensive depression travelled rapidly northeast across Britain, bringing storm-force winds to southeast England, where woodlands were extensively damaged. From 18th, high pressure returned to the east, bringing occasional periods of easterlies between the blocked arrivals of westerly air.*

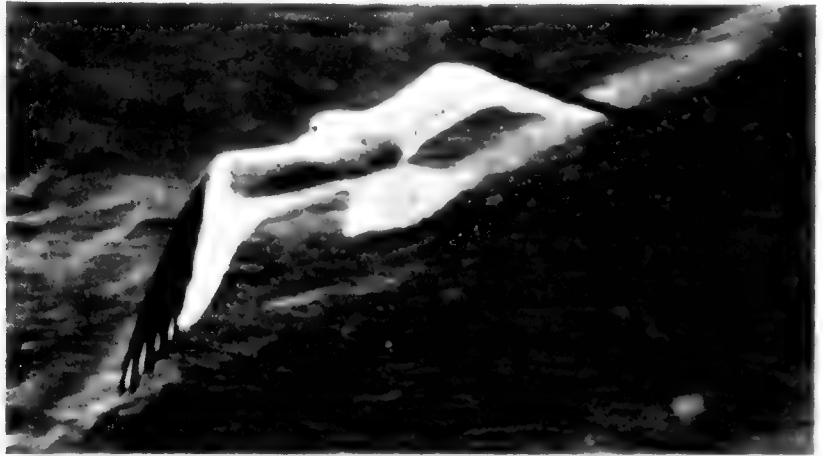
### It's an ill wind . . .

The sudden and unexpected storm overnight on 15th/16th wrought havoc on southeast England, but also left scattered in its wake an ornithological feast, the main course of which was an unprecedented inland wreck of **Sabine's Gulls** *Larus sabini* snatched up from the Bay of Biscay. About 60 were dumped on inland waters on 16th and 17th, centred around the London reservoirs, though the largest site-count





43 & 44. Juvenile (above) and adult (below) Sabine's Gulls *Larus sabini*, Berkshire, October 1987 (Reg Mellis)



was seven on Grafham Water (Cambridgeshire) (plates 43-45, 48-51). One at Chasewater (Staffordshire) was, by a long way, the farthest northwest. Although many stayed for a week or more, the only new records inland after 17th were in Avon, Somerset and West Yorkshire, suggesting wandering birds. On the south coast of England, about 120 were reported between 16th and 19th, the majority in the Solent area (Hampshire), and including 58 flying west past Hengistbury Head (Dorset) on 19th, presumably reorientating birds. From 20th onwards, there were only another 17 new coastal reports. Allowing that some duplication of records balances those not reported to date, the total number involved was perhaps 200, mostly adults. Even before the storm, this autumn was proving outstanding for this delightful Arctic gull, for, in addition to the large numbers in September, another 30 were widely reported on the west and south coasts of Britain and Ireland in the first half of October.

The chief side-dishes were **Grey Phalaropes** *Phalaropus fulicarius* (plates 46 & 47), **Great Skuas** *Stercorarius skua* and **Little Gulls** *L. minutus*: there were some 130 phalaropes between 16th and 19th, over half inland, including a flock of 20 at Grafham and 14 in the London area. Individuals were scattered farther afield than the Sabine's, some reaching Greater Manchester, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire. Thirty-four inland **Great Skuas** on 16th showed a slightly more northerly bias, with only five in the London area, but eight each in



45. Juvenile Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*, Cambridgeshire, October 1987 (Steve Young)



46. Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*, Surrey, October 1987 (G. D. J. Messenbird)

47. Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*, Berkshire, October 1987 (Peter Gasson)





48 & 49. Adult Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*, Berkshire, October 1987 (Tony Croucher)



50. Adult Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*, Cambridgeshire, October 1987 (Steve Young)





51. Adult Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*, Surrey, October 1987 (Dominic Mitchell)

Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire, five in Leicestershire and four in South Yorkshire. Over 200 **Little Gulls** were in the London area, mainly on the Thames, and good numbers elsewhere in the southeast, both inland and along the coast.

Other seabirds to be caught up and deposited inland included small numbers of **Pomarine Skuas** *S. pomarinus*, **Leach's Petrels** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*, **Sandwich** *Sterna sandvicensis* and **Arctic Terns** *S. paradisaea* and the odd **Gannet** *Sula bassana*. A full account of these events is being compiled by Rob Hume and will be published in *British Birds* in due course (see 'Request', *Brit. Birds* 80: 648).

#### Divers to herons

A **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* remained off Flamborough (Humberside) until 4th, while a **Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* was an unusual visitor to Thurso Bay (Highland) on 31st.

There was a small movement of shearwaters and petrels on the English west coast during 6th-11th, but exceptional numbers passed Dungeness (Kent), including a **Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis* on 9th, and record daily maxima for Kent of 408 **Sooty Shearwaters** *P. griseus* and 241 **Manx Shearwaters** *P. puffinus* on 9th, and 11 **Leach's Petrels** on 10th. On 11th, a **Black-browed Albatross** *Diomedea melanophrys* was seen off Filey (North Yorkshire) and an unidentified albatross (the same bird?) off Cley (Norfolk), while, a week later, an immature Black-browed Albatross was seen off Holme and Salt-house (Norfolk).

A **Green Heron** *Butorides striatus* picked up freshly dead, killed by a predator, at

52. Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia*, Cornwall, November 1987 (Graham Sutton)



Tynninghame (Lothian) on 25th, is only the third British record. Otherwise, large wading birds were few, with a **Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus* at Rye (East Sussex), a **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* at Pegwell Bay (Kent), a couple of **Purple Herons** *Ardea purpurea*, and up to three **Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* wandering in west Cornwall (plate 52).

### Wildfowl

Goose numbers seem to go from strength to strength every year. **Greylag Geese** *Anser anser* were streaming south all day on 9th through Orkney, while numbers of **Barnacle Geese** *Branta leucopsis* on Islay (Strathclyde) reached 20,000 on 13th. Across in Lothian, 15,100 **Pink-footed Geese** *A. brachyrhynchus* was a record count on 30th. Arriving with the geese on Islay were two small **Canada Geese** *B. canadensis* and two **Snow Geese** *A. caerulescens*; also on that island from 20th was a **Harlequin Duck** *Histrionicus histrionicus*, hot on the heels of last winter's Shetland bird. Nearctic ducks included five **Blue-winged Teals** *Anas discors*, eight **American Wigeons** *A. americana*, of which five were in Ireland, four **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* together at Lady's Island Lake (Co. Wexford) from 19th, and three **Surf Scoters** *Melanitta perspicillata*.

### Raptors to cranes

A grey **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* completed a fine collection of Arctic birds on Islay, while the other coast of Scotland saw a **Saker** *F. cherrug* on the Eden Estuary (Fife) on 25th. **Red-footed Falcons** *F. vespertinus* in Suffolk and Northumberland for a day each were late, as was a **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* over Prawle (Devon) on 16th.

The early-autumn influx of **Spotted Cranes** *Porzana porzana* tailed off, though about a dozen remained widely scattered in the first half of the month. The only notable report of **Cranes** *Grus grus* involved a party of 14 flying west past Hengistbury Head on 22nd.

### Waders

Four or five **American Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis dominica*, mainly in the Southwest, were unexceptional, but one on Davidstowe airfield (Cornwall) on 20th was accompanied by a **Sociable Plover** *Chettusia gregaria*. Late **Kentish Plovers** *Charadrius alexandrinus*

were at Calshot (Hampshire) and Ferrybridge (Dorset) in the latter half of the month.

Fair Isle (Shetland) had its third **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* of the autumn, from 17th-24th, but, apart from the phalaropes appearing in the aftermath of the 'hurricane', and a **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* remaining at Akeragh Lough (Co. Kerry), the other unusual waders were all of Nearctic origin. There were a dozen **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos*, including three at different sites in Northamptonshire early in the month, with, later, four together at Tacumshin (Co. Wexford) or Lady's Island Lake. These adjacent sites also held four **Long-billed Dowitchers** *Limnodromus scolopaceus*, with three elsewhere. Single **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor*, **Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria* and **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* stayed into early October, with another of the last on Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) in the first week. Four **Baird's Sandpipers** *C. bairdii* appeared in the West and Ireland, four **White-rumped Sandpipers** *C. fuscicollis* in the South and Southeast, two **Semipalmated Sandpipers** *C. pusilla* at Ballycotton (Co. Cork), and a **Stilt Sandpiper** *Micropalama himantopus* briefly at Minsmere (Suffolk) on 16th, but there was no discernible pattern to their arrivals.

### Skuas, terns and auks

A **South Polar Skua** *Stercorarius maccormickii* flew past St Ives (Cornwall) on 8th. An unseasonal **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* was near Hastings (East Sussex) on 17th and at Church Norton (West Sussex) the following day, while a **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* returned to Penmon, Anglesey (Gwynedd), midmonth for the third year (plate 61), and across in Wexford Harbour (Co. Wexford) the long-staying bird there was joined by a second on 18th. Only very small numbers of **Little Auks** *Alle alle* were seen off the English east coast late in the month.

### Near-passerines

**Alpine Swifts** *Apus melba* were noted over Tankerton (Kent) on 14th, and at Le Hocq (Jersey) on 1st, but a **Pallid Swift** *A. pallidus* at Pleinmont (Guernsey) on 15th and 16th was a first for the Channel Islands. Even more exciting was a **Chimney Swift** *Chaetura pelagica* at Grampound (Cornwall) on 18th, while also from across the Atlantic came **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** *Coccyzus americanus*



53. Red-rumped Swallows *Hirundo daurica*, Scilly, October 1987 (Richard G. Smith)



54. Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*, Lincolnshire, October 1987 (Keith Atkin)

to Lundy (Devon) on 16th and Rauceby Warren (Lincolnshire) on 18th and 19th. A **Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis* at Durkadale, Mainland (Orkney), also on 19th, was the first for those islands for 12 years.

#### Larks and swallows

Only four **Short-toed Larks** *Calandrella brachydactyla* were found. There were many reports of numbers of **Swallows** *Hirundo rustica* staying late, with, for example, 44 through Spurn (Humberside) and 220 through Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire) on 28th. Perhaps the most significant ornithological event of the month, along with the Sabine's Gull influx, was the unprecedented arrival of **Red-rumped Swallows** *H. daurica* (plate 53) from about 19th, when there were four together on Bryher (Scilly); subsequent multiple counts involved six on St Mary's (Scilly) on 27th, five at Point of Ayr (Clwyd) on 25th, four at Gibraltar Point on 27th, three south over Flamborough on 22nd, two or three through Landguard (Suffolk) on 28th, two at Trevail (Cornwall) on 25th, and two at Waxham (Norfolk) on 29th. Add singles from as far north as Fair Isle, and the true total must be in excess of 30 individuals.

#### Pipits

The *BB* Rarities Committee must be thankful that **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* (plate 54) no longer figures on its list, for a minimum of 65 was reported to us this month, mainly from the East Coast and Scilly, with nearly a third of them on 1st, the rest scattered fairly evenly through the month. No such luck with **Olive-backed**







55. Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*, Devon, October 1987 (J. Datchens)

**Pipits** *A. hodgsoni*, until recently regarded as a star 'Sibe': there was an astonishing arrival on Fair Isle from 2nd, with peaks of five on 15th and 20th, involving about a dozen individuals all told, while North Ronaldsay provided Orkney's first two records, on 5th and 30th. There were a further seven reported, ranging from Sumburgh (Shetland) to Scilly. By contrast, eight **Tawny Pipits** *A. campestris* outstripped **Red-throated Pipits** *A. cervinus* only by three. A **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* at Deerness (Orkney) on 4th was the only one. A black-bellied **Dipper** *Cinclus cinclus cinclus* at Anstruther (Fife) on 14th was an early arrival.

### Thrushes

Pride of place must go to the small North American thrushes, for they all turned up—except for the previously most regular in Britain, Gray-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus*. The first and best was the first **Wood Thrush** *Hylocichla mustelina* for Britain and Ireland, found skulking on St Agnes (Scilly) on 7th, and departing before being seen by all but a lucky few who managed to get across ahead of the approaching storm. Next on St Agnes was a **Hermit Thrush** *Catharus guttatus* from 15th-16th. Meanwhile, **Swainson's Thrushes** *C. ustulatus* appeared on St Mary's around 12th, in the Cot Valley (Cornwall) from 11th-20th, and on Lundy from 16th for the rest of the month. Amazingly this last was joined by a **Veery** *C. fuscescens* (plate 62) on 13th, though its identity remained in doubt until 23rd.

From the other direction came **Eye-browed Thrushes** *Turdus obscurus* to Fair Isle from 7th-15th, on St Mary's on 12th, and on St Agnes, again, on 27th. A fine male **Black-throated Thrush** *T. ruficollis* on St Mary's on

23rd had been preceded on 15th by the first British record of the nominate race, Red-throated Thrush, also a male, at South Stack, Anglesey. There were ten reports of **Stonechats** *Saxicola torquata* of one of the eastern races *maura/stejnegeri*, and, from an origin farther south, **Desert Wheatears** *Oenanthe deserti* were at Walton-on-the-Naze (Essex) on 12th (plate 59), on North Ronaldsay on 13th, and at Landguard from 20th-24th. This last was trapped and ringed, and astonishingly turned up a couple of days later at Prawle (Devon) where it remained until 30th (plate 55). On Guernsey on 20th, a **Black-eared Wheatear** *O. hispanica* was another first for the Channel Islands.

There were huge arrivals of thrushes in the Northern Isles from mid month, the largest there for several years. On 14th, there were 2,500 **Song Thrushes** *T. philomelos* on Fair Isle, and 147 were trapped on North Ronaldsay; Fair Isle also held 8,000 **Redwings** *T. iliacus* and 125 **Ring Ouzels** *T. torquatus*. On 21st, there were 'several tens of thousands' of **Fieldfares** *T. pilaris* and **Redwings** in Orkney, and 11,000 **Fieldfares** and 12,000 **Redwings** through Fair Isle on 21st and 22nd. Farther south, 1,000 **Song Thrushes** at Spurn on 19th was the 'largest-ever arrival' of that species there.



### Warblers

**Yellow-browed Warblers** *Phylloscopus inornatus* appeared in huge numbers again this autumn, with about 160 reported during the month, about half of them on 3rd and 4th, and further small peaks around 13th and 20th. There were also exceptional numbers of **Radde's** *P. schwarzi* and **Dusky Warblers** *P. fuscatus* around the same dates, with at least 11 and seven respectively: famous observatories to record their first Radde's included Fair Isle and Bardsey (Gwynedd), while Dusky Warblers were spread from North Ronaldsay to Old Head of Kinsale (Co. Cork). Most of the 34 **Pallas's Warblers** *P. proregulus* typically arrived later, with 15 between 19th and 22nd, and a further 12



56. Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*, Lincolnshire, October 1987 (Michael Tarrant)

between 28th and 31st. Only one **Bonelli's Warbler** *P. bonelli* turned up, in Scilly, but the star 'Phyllosc' was what appeared to be a **Two-barred Greenish Warbler** *P. plumbeitarsus* on Gugh (Scilly) from 21st-27th (plate 58), potentially the first for Britain and Ireland, and the second for the Western Palearctic.

There was a late **Aquatic Warbler** *Acrocephalus paludicola* trapped at Kenfig (Mid Glamorgan) on 4th, and from farther east came a **Paddyfield Warbler** *A. agricola* to Walton-on-the-Naze on 11th and a **Blyth's Reed Warbler** *A. dumetorum* at Tyne-mouth (Tyne & Wear) on 17th. Around 20th, there was a good fall of **Reed Warblers** *A. scirpaceus* in Scotland, where the species is rare, with at least 13 from Fair Isle to the Borders.

**Booted Warblers** *Hippolais caligata* were found by the hordes in Scilly, on St Mary's and St Agnes in the second half of the month, after one at Lerwick (Shetland) on 7th, but **Icterine** *H. icterina* and **Melodious Warblers** *H. polyglotta* were notable by their great scarcity.

A large arrival of **Blackcaps** *Sylvia atricapilla* on 14th found 250 on Fair Isle and many on North Ronaldsay, of which 50 were trapped. Rare 'Sylvias' were few, but included a **Dartford Warbler** *S. undata* on Cape Clear Island on 16th, a male **Sardinian Warbler** *S. melanocephala* on Guernsey on 18th, and a **Subalpine Warbler** *S. cantillans* at Tynningham on 1st, with another less unusually on St Agnes (plate 57), but about 16 **Barred Warblers** *S. nisoria* included one on Guernsey on 15th, almost unbelievably a new species for the Channel Islands. Good numbers of **Goldcrests** *Regulus regulus* passed through Bardsey early in the month, with a day-maximum of 250

on 5th. This influx was noted at other West Coast sites, and inland as far as Oxfordshire.

### Flycatchers to vireos

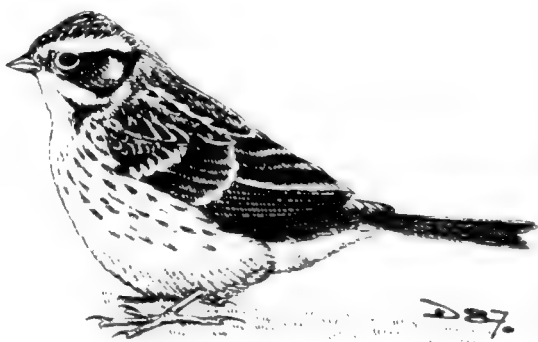
**Red-breasted Flycatchers** *Ficedula parva* (plate 56) followed the arrival pattern of other eastern drift migrants, some 50 individuals appearing, mostly in the first four days. A **Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus* was found at Pett Level (East Sussex) on 4th; a **Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris* on Fair Isle on 30th was only the fifth record there; and, a week previously, an **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* had turned up in Shetland. The most numerous Nearctic passerine, **Red-eyed Vireo** *Vireo olivaceus*, mustered a total of six this year, from 9th, with two each in Scilly and Cornwall, and singles at Prawle and Hengistbury Head. Not to be outdone by Ireland, Tresco pulled back **Philadelphia Vireo** *V. philadelphicus*, which performed for all from 10th-13th.

### Finches, American wood-warblers and buntings

There were few **Scarlet Rosefinches** *Carpodacus erythrinus*, but Fair Isle managed its second **Arctic Redpoll** *Carduelis hornemanni* of the autumn.

Although American warblers were few in number, all four waifs represented different species: a **Black-and-white Warbler** *Mniotilta varia* at Prawle from 8th-13th, a **Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Dendroica coronata* on Cape Clear Island on 8th and 9th, a **Blackpoll Warbler** *D. striata* on Tresco between 12th and 21st, and a **Northern Parula** *Parula americana* at Nanquidno (Cornwall) from 13th-23rd.

The **Savannah Sparrow** *Ammodramus sandwichensis* remained to 1st on Fair Isle. The same island attracted no fewer than three different **Pine Buntings** *Emberiza leucocephalos*, with another on North Ronaldsay. A mainland **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *E.*





*aureola*, at Fife Ness on 3rd, unfortunately stayed only briefly. Four **Rustic Buntings** *E. rustica* were above par for the month, though an excellent total of some 25 **Little Buntings** *E. pusilla* included at least eight on Fair

Isle. A female **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** *Pheucticus ludovicianus* on Cape Clear Island on 8th (plate 60) was just a few days short of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the occurrence there of Britain and Ireland's first.



57. Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*, Scilly, October 1987 (S. C. Hutchings)

58. Two-barred Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus*, Scilly, October 1987 (Andrew Moon)





59. Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*, Essex, October 1987 (Reg. J. Mellis)

60. Female Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Phoebastria ludovicianus*, Co. Cork, October 1987 (Anthony McGeehan)





61. Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*, Gwynedd, November 1987 (Steve Young)



62. Veery *Catharus fuscescens*, Devon, October 1987 (Nick Wall)

## Monthly marathon

November's wader photograph (*Brit. Birds* 80: 594, plate 302) was obviously far too easy to identify:

Greater Yellowlegs <i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	(74%)
Lesser Yellowlegs <i>T. flavipes</i>	(11%)
Redshank <i>T. totanus</i>	(8%)
Willet <i>Catoptrophorus semipalmatus</i>	(3%)
Spotted Redshank <i>T. erythropus</i>	(2%)
Greenshank <i>T. nebularia</i>	(1%)
Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>	(1%)

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The majority decision was correct: it was a Greater Yellowlegs, photographed in Peru in August 1979 by Ed Mackrill.

Graham Walbridge got it right. He, therefore, still leads this competition, with a six-in-a-row sequence of correct answers. Chasing him are 78 competitors, each with the last two photographs named correctly. If Graham Walbridge fails with any of his next four entries, one or more of this following group will take over in the race to win a SUNBIRD birding holiday in Africa, Asia or North America.



63. Second 'Monthly marathon' competition. Photograph number 10. Identify the species. Read the rules on page 49 in the January 1988 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th March 1988

## Recent reports

*Compiled by Mark Boyd*

**This summary covers the period 4th-17th January 1988**

**Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* Kenfig Pool (Mid Glamorgan), throughout.

**Lesser White-fronted Goose** *Anser erythropus* Slimbridge (Gloucestershire), from 10th.

**Red-breasted Goose** *Branta ruficollis* Blakey (Norfolk), throughout.

**Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* Timsbury Gravel-pits (Hampshire), throughout.

**Ferruginous Duck** *A. nyroca* Chorlton Water Park (Greater Manchester), 4th-8th; Sopley (Dorset), 1st-13th; Walthamstow Reservoir (Greater London), to at least 16th.

**Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* Gosford Bay (Lothian), three from 16th.

**Little Bustard** *Tetrax tetrax* Near Christchurch (Dorset), to 4th.

**Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* Marks-bury Plain (Avon), to at least 14th, believed to be this species, despite apparently pale

underwings.

**Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Belfast Lough (Northern Ireland), throughout.

**Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* Seaview (Isle of Wight), juvenile on 16th.

**Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus* Seaforth Nature Reserve, throughout; Croxley Green (Hertfordshire), throughout.

**Bonaparte's Gull** *L. philadelphia* Kilmore Quay (Co. Wexford), 9th.

**Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* Anglesey (Gwynedd), several dates.

**Shore Lark** *Eremophila alpestris* Titchwell (Norfolk), five throughout; Tynningham (Lothian), six throughout.

**Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor* Buddy Common (Nottinghamshire), 5th-7th; Exeter Forest (Devon), 14th-15th.

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# British Birds

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**Rare breeding birds in the UK in 1985**  
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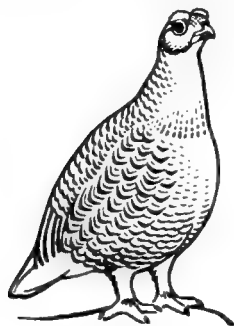
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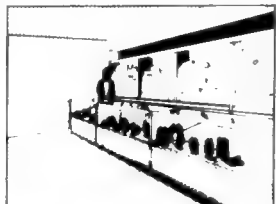
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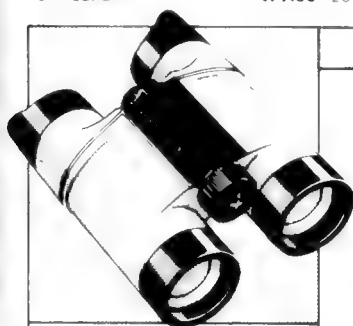
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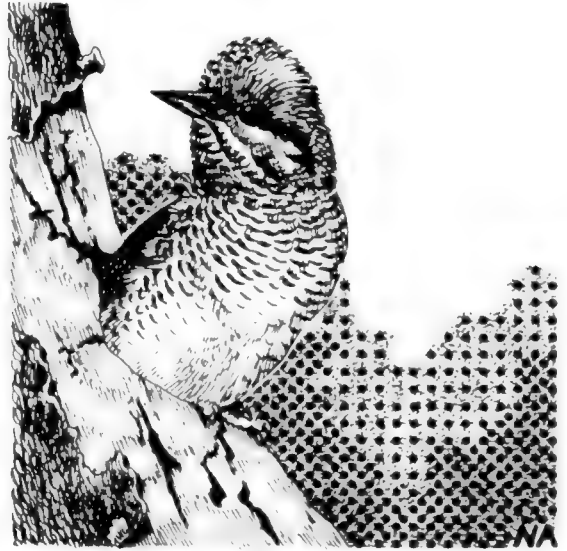




# British Birds

VOLUME 81 NUMBER 3 MARCH 1988

## Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 1985



*Compiled by Robert Spencer and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel*

**T**his is the thirteenth annual report published by the Panel, and it follows the style of presentation introduced progressively in the reports for 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 53-81) and 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 470-495). It is relatively complete in so far as nearly all county recorders have been able to submit data. It should, however, be noted that no data have been received from Northern Ireland, nor—officially—from Yorkshire, although one or two records submitted privately are incorporated.

In the introduction to the report for 1984 we wrote 'It is always difficult to fit the infinite variety of nature into rigid categories conceived by man', and we continue to experience difficulties of interpretation and expression whenever the boundaries of natural ecological units differ markedly from familiar administrative boundaries. Examples are not hard to find. The chalk uplands of southern and southeastern England are prime habitat for the Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicephalus*, and anyone carrying out a detailed survey of that species will have little if any reason to be conscious of county boundaries. County recorders, on the other hand, must stick to their patches. The great—and growing—conifer forests of northern England and southern Scotland are beginning to form a single biotope, where fieldworkers will have little difficulty in determining natural boundaries. Yet, through the middle of those forests runs the now

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arbitrary-seeming country boundary. Thus, if the Panel is presented with a total figure for the forest population, there is no ready method of determining which individuals, if any, were in England and which in Scotland.

It would be fair to ask whether this uncertainty is important. The theoretical answer is probably no, yet in practice it is desirable and important to know. Records for an area often come in from two sources—the recorder, who has to observe county boundaries, and an individual specialist, who bases his study on the ecological unit. To try to avoid duplication, the two sets of figures must be compared, but this is often impossible because the locality descriptions are too imprecise and map references are lacking. The Panel appreciates the desire of fieldworkers to protect their ‘charges’, but nevertheless does appeal for the regular use of map references. Observers may rest assured that information submitted on a confidential basis will remain confidential. In published reports, localities (other than reserves such as Havergate Island) are never named, and county names are used only when the Panel has been authorised to do so. Many published records are placed only within a region, and the regions (listed below) represent very large areas of land. A further stage in preventing the chance of a site being identified from a Panel report is the combining of regions: for example, ‘England, SW & SE’.

For some time now, ornithological recording in Scotland has officially been based on the new political regions, but the old counties are retained as districts within the regions; and old habits die hard. Some reports received by the Panel relate to the regions, and others to districts, and it is often convenient to retain this dichotomy of approach. It would certainly be very time-consuming for the Panel to have to trace every locality on the map in order to standardise on the new terminology, and, so long as the meaning is clear, it perhaps does not matter that the name in capital letters is sometimes that of a region, and sometimes that of a district.

Also in the introduction to the report for 1984 was the statement that ‘we see the Panel’s role as becoming practical rather than academic’. The Panel was established to document for posterity the processes of colonisation and retreat—the endless ebb and flow of bird populations—but in recent years it has become clear that the data in the Panel’s files could and should be used to further the aims of conservation. From our admittedly privileged position of insight, we reaffirm that view. At the same time, and unexpectedly, we must report an increased academic interest in the data. In a paper entitled ‘Biological characteristics of invaders among bird species in Britain’ (*Phil. Trans. R. Soc. Lond.* B314, 583–598), Dr R. J. O’Connor made use of the Panel’s published reports in an attempt to identify the underlying causes of colonisation. Probably few of us browse through the reports without occasionally wondering ‘Why?’ Why has the colonisation of Scotland by Shore Larks *Eremophila alpestris* and Lapland Buntings *Calcaeus lapponicus* apparently come to an end? And why did it begin in the first place? Why has the Cetti’s Warbler *Cettia cetti* secured a stronger base in England than has the Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*, and in a fraction of the time? Dr O’Connor suggested three main



considerations: (1) a propensity for long-distance migration may be disadvantageous in facilitating successful invasion, (2) invasion is likely to be more successful if a source of population is nearby to sustain and reinforce the invaders until the new population has become self-sustaining, and (3) a high rate of population increase is advantageous, especially if produced as a series of clutches each season rather than as a single clutch. Inevitably, there will be exceptions—such as the Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*, which ought surely to have settled here by now—but it will be interesting to watch future developments in the light of these three points. Meanwhile, presumably as a result of Dr O'Connor's paper, workers in a number of countries have shown interest in the Panel's work and have requested copies of current Panel reports.

In 1985, Ian Prestt retired from the Panel, his place being taken by Richard Porter, the other members being Dr L. A. Batten, R. H. Dennis, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock and Robert Spencer (Secretary). Whilst the work of the Panel is sponsored by the NCC, the RSPB, the BTO and *British Birds*, it is considered important that, in the framework of the Panel's activities, members should be free to have allegiance only to the birds. For that reason, their appointments are in a personal capacity, albeit with a specialised knowledge of the interests and requirements of the sponsoring bodies.

## The year 1985

The profit and loss account for the year 1985 is a difficult one to draw. It was, perhaps, weak on oddities or the spectacular, although the early pages of the systematic list offer, *inter alia*, a mixed pairing of Great Northern Diver with Black-throated Diver *Gavia immer* × *G. arctica*, the nearest to British breeding yet recorded for Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*, the attempted mixed pairing of Smew with Goldeneye *Mergus albellus* × *Bucephala clangula* and, towards the end of the list, the first known successful breeding of Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*.

Birds of prey offered some of the nest success stories, including the long-awaited first successful breeding of White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, and record numbers fledged of Red Kite *Milvus milvus*, Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* and Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*. Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* prospered, in a breeding season which seems to have suited neither Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* nor Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*, whilst Purple Sandpipers *Calidris maritima* and Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus* began to look a trifle more secure in their new-found homes. There was the first recorded breeding for several years of Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, and the improved reporting of Snow Buntings *Plectrophenax nivalis* was maintained.

Adverse weather certainly affected the breeding populations of some species and the breeding success of others. Presumably one need look no farther than the severe cold of January and February 1985 to account for the decline in numbers of Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris*, and it is remarkable that the two resident warblers, Cetti's and Dartford *Sylvia undata*, came through the cold with relatively small population losses. Doubtless their

fecundity is in line with Dr O'Connor's third desideratum for successful colonists. Breeding of Black-necked Grebes *Podiceps nigricollis* is reported to have been adversely affected by a cold spring, high water levels, and slow growth of vegetation.

Garganeys *Anas querquedula*, notoriously given to population fluctuations, arrived in numbers well below those of 1984, as did Firecrests *Regulus ignicapillus*, but it is doubtful that the two species were responding to a common environmental factor.

These lines, written towards the end of the 1987 breeding season, hark back to events two years earlier, but are inevitably coloured by the vivid recollection of more recent weather. What can small song birds do to protect their young when two inches of rain falls in three hours? How can parents both brood their tiny young throughout 48 hours of steady, cold rain and yet also find and secure the necessary food for them? Weather and slight changes of climate must always play a part in the changing fortunes of small, and therefore more-vulnerable, bird populations.

## Species for which the Panel requires data

The following species, together with any which are breeding in Britain or Ireland for the first time, or for the first time in many years:

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*  
 Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*  
 Slavonian Grebe *P. auritus*  
 Black-necked Grebe *P. nigricollis*  
 Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris*  
 Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*  
 Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*  
 Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*  
 Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*  
 Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*  
 Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*  
 American Black Duck *Anas rubripes*  
 Pintail *A. acuta*  
 Garganey *A. querquedula*  
 Scaup *Aythya marila*  
 King Eider *Somateria spectabilis*  
 Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*  
 Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*  
 Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*  
 Smew *Mergus albellus*  
 Honey Buzzard *Permis apivorus*  
 Red Kite *Milvus milvus*  
 White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*  
 Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*  
 Montagu's Harrier *C. pygargus*  
 Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*  
 Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*  
 Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*  
 Hobby *Falco subbuteo*  
 Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*  
 Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*  
 Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*  
 Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedipnemos*

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*  
 Sanderling *Calidris alba*  
 Temminck's Stint *C. temminckii*  
 Purple Sandpiper *C. maritima*  
 Jack Snipe *Lymnocyrtus minimus*  
 Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*  
 Whimbrel\* *Numenius phaeopus*  
 Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*  
 Wood Sandpiper *T. glareola*  
 Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*  
 Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*  
 Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*  
 Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*  
 Little Gull *L. minutus*  
 Glaucous Gull *L. hyperboreus*  
 Roseate Tern† *Sterna dougallii*  
 Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*  
 Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*  
 Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*  
 Hoopoe *Upupa epops*  
 Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*  
 Woodlark *Lullula arborea*  
 Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris*  
 Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*  
 Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*  
 Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*  
 Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*  
 Redwing *T. iliacus*  
 Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*  
 Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*  
 Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*  
 Great Reed Warbler *A. arundinaceus*  
 Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

\* away from Northern Isles. † away from main breeding sites.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*  
 Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*  
 Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*  
 Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*  
 Great Grey Shrike *L. excubitor*  
 Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

Serín *Serinus serinus*  
 Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*  
 Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*  
 Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*  
 Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*  
 Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirrus*

Fig. 1. Geographical regions of the United Kingdom used in this report. Numbers refer to counties listed below



## Key to geographical regions used in this report

Numbers refer to fig. 1.

1. NORTHERN IRELAND Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, Tyrone
2. ENGLAND, SW Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Isles of Scilly, Somerset, Wiltshire
3. ENGLAND, SE Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Greater London, Hertfordshire, Kent, Middlesex, Oxfordshire, Surrey, Sussex (East and West)
4. ENGLAND, E Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Lincolnshire & South Humberside, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Suffolk
5. ENGLAND, CENTRAL Derbyshire, Herefordshire, Leicestershire (with Rutland), Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire (West Midlands in the new county structure), Worcestershire
6. ENGLAND, N Cheshire, Cleveland, Cumbria, Durham, Greater Manchester, Isle of Man, Lancashire, Merseyside, Northumberland, North Humberside, Tyne & Wear, Yorkshire (North, South and West)
7. WALES All present-day counties (i.e. includes the former Monmouth)
8. SCOTLAND, S The former counties of Ayrshire, Berwickshire, Dumfriesshire, Kirkcudbrightshire, Lanarkshire, Lothian (East, Mid and West), Peeblesshire, Renfrewshire, Roxburghshire, Selkirkshire, Wigtownshire
9. SCOTLAND, MID Aberdeenshire, Angus, Banffshire, Clackmannanshire, Dunbartonshire, Fife, Kincardineshire, Kinross, Morayshire, Nairn, Perthshire, Stirlingshire
10. SCOTLAND, N & W Argyll, Bute, Caithness, Inverness-shire, Orkney, Ross & Cromarty, Shetland, Sutherland, Western Isles (Outer Hebrides)

Systematic list

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

One locality: one individual.

Scotland, N One locality: adult, paired with Black-throated Diver *G. arctica*, from 8th May to June, but no evidence of breeding.

A pair of Great Northern Divers bred in 1970 and there was a hybrid pairing Great Northern × Black-throated in 1971.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

One locality: one, possibly two, pairs.

Scotland, S One locality: present in breeding plumage from 23rd May to 27th July; pair, with much display, carrying of nest material, and attempted mating; third on nine dates, thought to be a female, and one report, on 3rd July, of four.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	2	5	2	0	1	3	3	2	2	1	1
No. individuals	2	5	2	0	1	4	2	2	3	1	4
No. pairs	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1

The observations summarised above encourage the belief that breeding will eventually be attempted at this site.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

40 localities: 63-81 pairs breeding.

Scotland, S One locality: one at a suitable water from 28th May to 22nd October, eventually moulting there.

Scotland, Mid Three localities.

PERTSHIRE One locality: single present from 31st July to 3rd August, said (by anglers) to have been present for two to three weeks before 31st July.

ELSEWHERE Two localities: (1) two pairs, one of which reared two young; (2) adult from 17th April to 20th May.

Scotland, N 36 localities.

INVERNESS-SHIRE 36 localities: (1)-(36) total of 62 pairs, rearing 29-47 young.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	23	23	15	18	27	36	35	25	44	26	40
Confirmed (pairs)	54	70	42	37	58	53	52	51	41	39	63
Possible (pairs)	12	5	9	18	19	27	19	8	38	21	18
Max. total (pairs)	66	75	51	55	77	80	71	59	79	60	81

The higher figures are largely attributable to more waters being surveyed in 1985 compared with 1984, but it was the best breeding season since 1973.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

15 localities: 8-21 pairs breeding.

England, E Three localities, in same county: (1) three on 28th March; (2) one, in full breeding plumage, on 5th April; (3) one, in breeding plumage, on 5th May. 'The birds seem to have a look at each site and move around.'

England, Central One locality: following up report of nest, observers found two moulting birds which, by their behaviour, were obviously paired.

England, N Six localities, involving three counties: (1) one on 26th May, 'no possibility of undetected breeding'; (2) one or two adults on various dates between 8th March and 15th May at locality where breeding occurred in 1984; (3) one to three adults in breeding plumage

on various dates between 26th May and 13th July; (4) adult in breeding plumage on 16th May; (5) five pairs reared only 13 young; (6) two adults on 20th April and from 20th to 25th May, one immature from 17th August to 21st September.

**Scotland, Mid** Five localities, involving two counties: (1) two pairs reared three young; (2) pair in May, but no proof of breeding; (3) three on 25th March, one adult with two juveniles plus one separate juvenile on 1st August; (4) single juveniles, at least two involved, from 6th to 16th August, thought to be from locality 3; (5) pair on 21st and 25th April and single nearby from 27th May to 10th July.

**Addendum**

1984 GREATER MANCHESTER Two visited several waters between 24th April and 20th May.

1975 1976 1977 1978 1979 1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985

No. localities	4	2	7	6	6	9	7	12	19	15	15
Confirmed (pairs)	2	10	11	13	12	11	5	11	11	16	8
Possible (pairs)	9	1	5	2	2	10	7	10	21	12	13
Max. total (pairs)	11	11	16	15	14	21	12	21	32	28	21

The species evidently suffered a reverse of fortunes in 1985. From the most successful site in recent years came the observation that 'The cold spring, high water levels, and slow growth of vegetation delayed breeding and no young were seen until July.'

**Black-browed Albatross** *Diomedea melanophris*

One locality: one summered with Gannets *Sula bassana*.

**Scotland, N** One locality.

SHETLAND One locality: adult in colony from 10th March to late September.

Still no mate.

**Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris*

15 localities: at least 28 booming males.

**England, E** 14 localities, of which 11 were in Norfolk: (1) up to five males and seven females during the year; (2) three booming males; (3) two booming males; (4)-(14) single booming males. No proof of breeding obtained.

**England, N** One locality: seven or eight booming males.

1977 1978 1979 1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985

No. localities	18	17	21	19	16	15	18	18	15
Confirmed (pairs)	0	2	1	4	1	1	0	5	0
Booming males	43	47	51	48	47	35	44-45	36	28-29

The figures are the lowest since the Bittern was added to the Panel's list in 1977 and it seems likely that the species was adversely affected by cold weather in January and the early part of February 1985.

**Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus*

Six localities: two or three feral pairs and five singles.

**Scotland, Mid** One locality.

DUNBARTONSHIRE One locality: pair reared two cygnets from clutch of five eggs, second pair abandoned their nest about 17th June, and third pair was present at beginning of the season but 'tended to come and go'; also single male, often seen soliciting female Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*.

**Scotland, N** Four localities: (1)-(4) single adults on separate lochs in June, with no evidence to suggest that any of them was paired.

The status hardly changes from year to year.

**American Black Duck** *Anas rubripes*  
One locality: female mated with male Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*.

**Scotland, S** One locality.  
EAST LOTHIAN One locality: female recorded 9th February to 23rd May, 20th July and 31st August. Copulation observed on at least two occasions, but no signs of any subsequent young.

In recent years, similar hybrid pairings have been reported from the Isles of Scilly and from Gwynedd.

**Pintail** *Anas acuta*  
13 localities: 9-17 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** Two localities.  
CORNWALL One locality: broods of two and five noted at water where pinioned pair released several years ago.  
DORSET One locality: two pairs present until 14th May and a single on 12th June, but no proof of breeding.  
**England, E** One locality.  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: two males and one female present throughout summer, female giving distraction display to fox *Vulpes vulpes* on 25th May, but any nest would have been flooded out several days later.  
**England, N** One locality.  
DURHAM One locality: female with two or three ducklings (date not reported).  
**Scotland, N** Nine localities.  
ARGYLL Two localities: (1) female with young 20th June; (2) female with young 16th June.  
CAITHNESS One locality: pair on 28th and 29th May.  
INVERNESS-SHIRE One locality: pair from 9th to 24th April and male on 7th June.  
ORKNEY Four localities: (1) three nests located and brood of about four seen on 30th June; (2) pair in late April and female on 17th May; (3) pair in mid April; (4) pair displaying on 25th April.  
WESTERN ISLES One locality: pair and second female throughout April, pair remaining until 5th May and second female until 10th June; may have attempted to breed.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	11	10	15	10	19	15	16	18	22	15	13
Confirmed (pairs)	12	6	10	7	10	9	8	7	12	5	9
Possible (pairs)	13	10	16	16	31	16	23	25	15	13	8
Max. total (pairs)	25	16	26	23	41	25	31	32	27	17	17

It seems likely that the small Scottish population is relatively stable.

**Garganey** *Anas querquedula*  
29 localities: 4-41 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** Two localities: 0-2 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Avon	1	0	0	1	1
Devon	1	0	0	1	1

**England, SE** Three localities: 1-4 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Kent	3	1	0	3	4

**England, E** 18 localities: 3-28 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Cambridgeshire	2	1	0	10	11
Lincolnshire/South Humberside	1	0	1	0	1
Norfolk	13	2	1	11	14
Northamptonshire	1	0	0	1	1
Suffolk	1	0	1	0	1

**England, Central** One locality: 0-1 pair breeding.

County	Locality	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Leicestershire	1	0	1	0	1

**England, N** Three localities: 0-3 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Greater Manchester	1	0	0	1	1
Lancashire	1	0	0	1	1
Yorkshire	1	0	0	1	1

**Scotland** Two localities: 0-3 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Borders	1	0	0	2	2
Kinross	1	0	0	1	1

**Addendum**

1984 GREATER MANCHESTER One locality: pair from 28th April to early May, two males in late May and singing male on 3rd June.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	34	48	66	58	46	29
Confirmed (pairs)	4	8	10	15	4	4
Possible (pairs)	50	50	84	51	53	33
Max. total (pairs)	54	58	94	66	57	41

The year 1985 was the poorest for this species since it was added to the Panel's list in 1980, the paucity of records from SE England being particularly striking. It is well established, however, that numbers tend to fluctuate considerably from year to year.

**Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra*

20 localities: 2-47 pairs breeding.

**Scotland, Mid** Three localities.

DUNBARTONSHIRE/STIRLINGSHIRE One locality: early-morning census on 22nd May located four pairs plus two additional males; but no subsequent reports of young.

PERTSHIRE Two localities: (1) four males and three females on 2nd June, one female with six young and party of six females on 11th July; (2) party of six, with no adult male among them, on 3rd May.

**Scotland, N** 17 localities.

ARGYLL Two localities: (1) male and two females on 9th and 20th May; (2) nine, not sexed, on 14th May.

INVERNESS-SHIRE Three localities: (1) three pairs plus male and two females on 25th May.



seven females adjacent on 13th July; (2) one seen; (3) four agitated females on 21st June.  
 ROSS-SHIRE One locality: two pairs displaying on 30th May, female and brood of five young on 30th July.

SHETLAND 11 localities: (1)-(11) from one to six at each locality, some until 28th June, but no proof of breeding.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	12	14	13	9	17	10	6	17	6	9	20
Confirmed (pairs)	32	22	24	16	98	7	5	14	10	17	2
Possible (pairs)	127	137	132	125	30	106	77	98	75	52	45
Max. total (pairs)	159	159	156	141	128	113	82	112	85	69	47

The figures should be interpreted with considerable caution. In the first place, no data have been received from the single most important community in Northern Ireland, whilst the number of localities is evidently swollen by the unusually high figure for Shetland. Several of the regular sites were not visited in 1985.

### Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Six localities: 67-71 pairs breeding.

**England, N** One locality.

CUMBRIA One locality: pair on 1st June.

**Scotland, S** Two localities.

BORDERS Two localities: (1) three pairs and eight immatures on 7th May, three pairs and four immatures on 22nd May, female on 4th August; (2) female on 4th August.

**Scotland, N & W** Total of 67 clutches laid, of which 49 successfully incubated, to produce minimum of 336 ducklings, with average brood-size of 8.40.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	3	8	12	18	17	11	13	11	11	5	4
Confirmed (pairs)	3	5	6	12	22	26	29	27	47	53	67
Possible (pairs)	3	7	8	15	21	11	25	30	9	3	4
Max. total (pairs)	6	12	14	27	43	37	54	57	56	56	71
Young hatched	10	46	11	40	110	165	286	220	209	311	336

In this continuing success story, it should be stressed that the number of localities where breeding is occurring is actually increasing, but, rather than individual nest sites, it seems more meaningful to think in terms of broad localities. Records from northern England and from southern Scotland seem, at this stage, to represent late-departing winter visitors, but, as the breeding population increases, an eventual overspill into quite new areas seems likely.

### Smew *Mergus albellus*

One locality: one individual.

**Scotland, N** One locality: male displaying to two female Goldeneyes *Bucephala clangula* on 12th May, seen with female Goldeneye at regular nesting location for that species on 18th May; last seen 29th May.

Hybrids between these two species do occur in northern Scandinavia.

### Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Three localities: 0-3 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** One locality: two present on 2nd June, with the male displaying; pair not very far away on 10th June; existence of nest suspected.

**England, SE** One locality: two, with display flights, and one observer claiming that three were present; no evidence of nesting.

**England, E** One locality: single located on 23rd June, apparently did not remain in area.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
--	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	2	7	8	8	3	3	8	2	2	0	3
Confirmed (pairs)	0	0	2	1	1	2	2	1	0	0	0
Max. total (pairs)	2	7	8	8	3	4	9	2	2	0	3

The above entry excludes data from the main breeding area of the species in Britain, where, it is understood, there are normally about ten pairs breeding.

**Red Kite** *Milvus milvus*

43 breeding pairs of which 19 pairs reared 25 young.

**England, SW** One locality: one for first two weeks of July.

**Wales** 54 localities: 54 pairs known, of which 43 laid eggs. Of these, 19 pairs were successful, rearing 25 young, with 12 broods of one, four broods of two and one brood of three. Five clutches were incubated full term, but failed to hatch. Up to eight nests were robbed of eggs and in only one of these was a repeat clutch laid (which was unsuccessful). This was the worst year for egg robberies in modern times. Other causes of failure included predation by Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* and Buzzards *Buteo buteo*, wet weather during the chick stage, and the death (probably by shooting) of an incubating female. One adult was killed by a jet aircraft shortly before the breeding season.

In addition to the above, at least 27 unmated non-breeders were identified in spring, so that the minimum population in April was 135 individuals.

Once again, the Panel is deeply indebted to Peter Davis and the Kite Committee for the provision of an admirably detailed summary.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Total pairs	32	36	34	39	42	42	46	47	46	46	54
Breeding pairs	28	29	28	32	30	29	32	38	33	33	43
Successful pairs	15	15	12	13	14	21	18	19	20	13	19
Young reared	24	18	17	22	18	27	21	23	24	21	25

Another successful year, despite persecution by egg thieves. The Panel is interested in breeding-season records away from the recognised breeding area. Such records may be precursors of eventual breeding attempts away from Wales.

**White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Re-introduction: 4 pairs laid eggs, 1 young reared.

**Scotland** The White-tailed Eagle project received ten young eagles from Norway and they were successfully released on Rhum, Highland, this bringing the total released since 1975 to 82. Nesting activity occurred at at least six sites, and four pairs laid eggs. One pair successfully reared one young, the first young fledged in Britain since early this century, and a second youngster died in the nest. Three other pairs failed before or close to hatching time, probably influenced by severe snow blizzards. (The Panel is grateful to John A. Love for preparing this summary.)

All records of White-tailed Eagles in Scotland should be sent to Roy Dennis, RSPB Highland Office, Munloch, Ross & Cromarty IV3 3ND, or to the Panel's Secretary (see address at the end of this report).

**Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*

24 localities: 86 young reared from 31 nests.

**England, E** 24 localities. Number of young reared from two nests not known, although both believed to have been successful. From remaining nests, total of 86 young reared to flying stage, with mean of three young fledged per nest. This is substantially better than mean of 2.5 young per nest recorded during previous 14 years. Only one nest in crops, remainder being in more-typical reedbed sites. There were three bigamous males at two sites. At least 11 non-breeding pairs summered, as well as two adult females, one immature female and three immature males. Since 1970, at least 575 young Marsh Harriers have fledged from 231 nests in Britain (fig. 2). (Based on report by John Day, augmented by data from the Panel's files.)

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Breeding ♂♂	5	11	13	14	11	16	17	19	21	27	28
Breeding ♀♀	7	11	15	14	16	20	20	24	28	32	31
Fledged young	18	27	44	36	38	44	48	59	71	66	86
Mean fledged young per nest	2.6	2.4	2.9	2.6	2.4	2.2	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.4	3.0

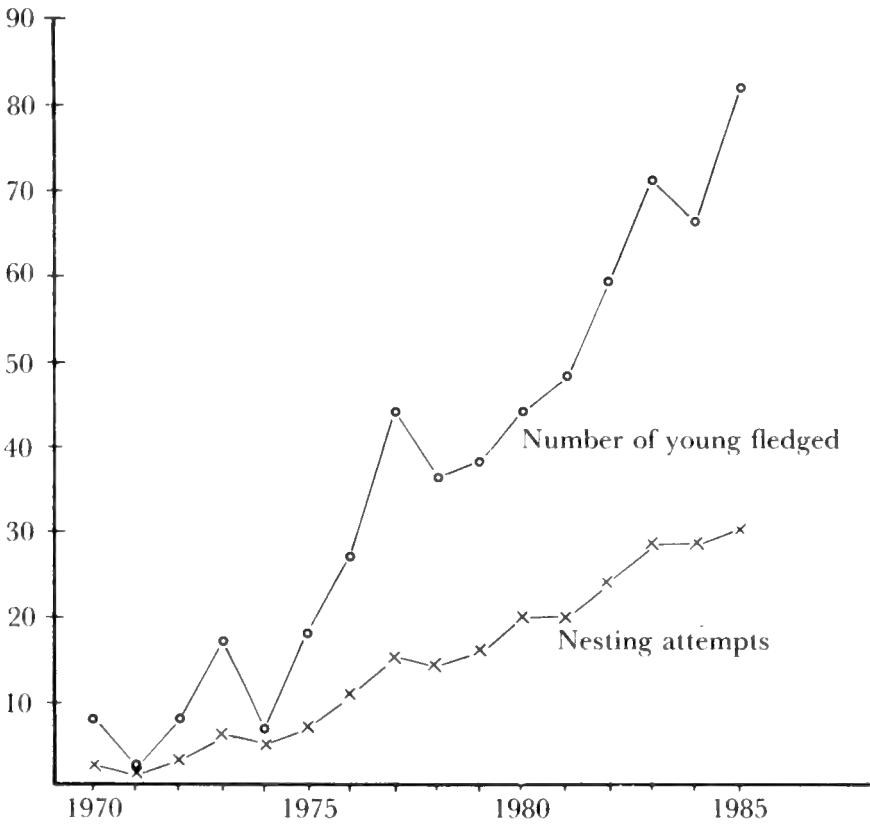


Fig. 2. Number of nesting attempts and total young fledged per annum by British Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* in Britain during 1970-85 (prepared by John Day)

The continued success of this species may be attributed partly to much hard work on the part of conservation bodies and partly to a thriving population in the Netherlands, elements of which may have ‘overflowed’ into East Anglia.

**Montagu’s Harrier *Circus pygargus***

Eight localities: 3-8 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** Five localities: (1) female on 23rd and 26th May, pair on 5th June; (2) female on 27th and 28th April and 3rd May, immature male on 25th May and 22nd June, female on 22nd June, immature male on 29th June: these records relate to four different sites in same general area; (3) female over cereals on 1st June; (4) male on 12th June; (5) pair hatched three young, but lost them during poor weather some time between 20th and 25th July.

**England, E** Two localities: (1) two pairs nested, rearing broods of three and four from nests located in crops; (2) male on 14th July in remote, under-watched area possibly suitable for breeding.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	3	4	2	7	4	8	8	7	8	2	8
Confirmed (pairs)	0	3	1	2	2	2	2	6	6	1	3
Possible (pairs)	3	2	1	5	2	6	7	5	4	1	5
Max. total (pairs)	3	5	2	7	4	8	9	8	10	2	8
Fledged young	0	6	0	3	7	4	4	4	9	3	7

The species continues to have a somewhat tenuous toe-hold in Britain, and it may be that our damp maritime climate militates against it in wet summers. The Panel acknowledges the assistance of John Day in preparing the entry for this species.

**Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis*  
64 localities: 36-65 pairs breeding.

**England and Wales** 48 localities, involving 17 counties: (1)-(48) 30 pairs known to have attempted breeding, rearing at least 36 young; also nine 'probable' and ten 'possible' pairs, giving total of 49 pairs.

**Scotland** 16 localities, involving two regions: (1)-(16) six pairs known to have attempted breeding, rearing at least seven young; also ten 'possible' pairs, giving total of 16 pairs.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Counties*	14	10	15	18	21	21	27	16	17	22	19
Confirmed (pairs)	5	12	15	14	23	17	15	23	30	35	36
Possible (pairs)	29	16	22	26	21	32	37	18	25	41	29
Max. total (pairs)	34	28	37	40	44	49	52	41	55	76	65

\* In Scotland, from 1985, regions, not counties.

As in all recent years, the Panel has received reports both of eggs and of young being taken, and of a number of pairs deserting apparently owing to disturbance. Despite such persecution and interference, the Goshawk population is probably increasing slowly, but part of any indicated increase could be due to the Panel learning about well-established pairs which had not hitherto been reported.

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*  
36 localities: 28 pairs reared 53 young.

**Scotland, S** Two localities: (1)-(2) one summered at each, from May to August.

**Elsewhere in Scotland** 34 pairs: 28 pairs laid eggs and there were 22 successful broods, including one of four, the first four-chick brood this century. Individuals in a variety of other places, suggesting increased numbers of prospecting sub-adults, so outlook for the future looks very encouraging. (All breeding data compiled by Roy Dennis on behalf of the RSPB.)

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Pairs	14	14	20	22	25	25	25	30	30	31	34
Successful pairs	7	10	7	11	16	19	20	21	20	21	22
Young reared	16	20	13	19	30	41	42	45	45	47	53

The successful rearing of over 50 young in a single season represents a significant landmark in the recolonisation of Scotland by the Osprey.

**Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*

216 localities: 76-219 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** 87 localities: 12-89 pairs breeding, 21 young known.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Avon	5	1	0	4	5
Gloucestershire	3	0	0	4	4
Hampshire	50	7	0	43	50
Somerset	10	1	4	5	10
Wiltshire	19	3	10	7	20

**England, SE** 84 localities: 45-85 pairs breeding, 35 young known.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Bedfordshire	4	3	1	0	4
Berkshire	5	0	0	5	5
Buckinghamshire	19	15	0	4	19
Essex	2	2	0	0	2
Hertfordshire	25	5	7	13	25
Kent	4	1	2	1	4
Oxfordshire	5	5	0	0	5
Surrey	14	9	1	5	15
Sussex	6	5	1	0	6

**England, E** 32 localities: 13-32 breeding pairs, 22 young known.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Cambridgeshire	6	4	2	0	6
Lincolnshire/South Humberside	2	0	0	2	2
Norfolk	2	2	0	0	2
Northamptonshire	17	4	13	0	17
Suffolk	5	3	0	2	5

**England, Central** Eight localities: 4-8 pairs breeding, 4 young known

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Derbyshire	1	1	0	0	1
Herefordshire	3	1	1	1	3
Leicestershire	1	1	0	0	1
Shropshire	3	1	0	2	3

**Wales** Five localities: 2-5 pairs breeding, no young reported.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Gwent	5	2	1	2	5

**Addenda**

1984 BEDFORDSHIRE Four localities: (1) pair bred; (2)-(3) one and two pairs, respectively, in suitable habitat during breeding season; (4) pair regarded as possibly breeding.

1984 HERTFORDSHIRE One locality: pair reared two young.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Confirmed (pairs)	38	59	51	70	80	64	51	97	80	93	76
Possible (pairs)	95	84	68	86	52	91	109	105	182	116	143
Max. total (pairs)	133	143	119	156	132	155	160	202	262	209	219
Young reared (minima)	42	69	78	96	72	86	89	63	104	91	82

It should be emphasised that the numbers given are minima. Not only is the species easily overlooked or difficult to track down, but there are no numbers available for Devon, where the Hobby is relatively numerous. The figures for young fledged are equally conservative. It is possible to determine brood size without climbing the nest tree, but not always easy to do so accurately.

**Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana*

Two localities: 0-3 pairs breeding.

**England, E** Two localities: (1) one calling 30th June to 3rd July and another on 4th and 6th July: presumed to have bred; (2) one calling in late June and early July.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Counties	0	1	3	6	2	1	3	1	3	3	2
No. localities	0	2	4	6	4	3	4	2	6	4	2
Calling ♂♂	0	2	7	6	8	4	9	3	12	10	3

A marked decline, following two outstanding years.

**Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta*

14 localities: 269-272 pairs reared at least 245 young.

**England, SE & E** 14 localities. As in 1984, main sites were Havergate Island, Suffolk, where 132 pairs reared 122 young, and Minsmere, Suffolk, where 42 pairs reared 26 young.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	6	5	6	3	3	5	5	9	9	11	14
Confirmed (pairs)	158	151	146	145	147	168	201	190	238	237	269
Young reared (minima)	142	68	14	92	99	101	155	150	192	118	245

The year 1985 was a very good one for the Avocet, with more localities occupied than ever before and a record number of young reared. Whilst breeding success will continue to vary, it is clear that the species is no longer a 'reserves only' breeder, and its future as a British breeding bird will in part depend on the good sense of birdwatchers in allowing it freedom from disturbance.

**Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oediconemus*

128 localities: 81-128 pairs breeding.

The Panel has received two sets of data, one in the normal manner, through county recorders and based on county boundaries; the other from the RSPB, derived from considerable fieldwork, and based on large ecological divisions, in one case impinging on four counties. In general, the 'county' figures are more detailed, whereas the RSPB figures appear to be fuller, but lack the details, including map references, which alone would permit thorough cross-checking. In what follows, the RSPB data cover 'England, South Central' and 'East Anglia', whilst the 'England, SE' figures are derived from customary sources.

**England, South Central** Estimate of 45 pairs, but fieldwork in 1986 indicated that this was

probably an overestimate, and 30 pairs is the likely total.

**England, SE** Ten localities: 8-10 pairs breeding, four young reared.

**East Anglia** 73 pairs, of which 60 pairs produced 76 nests; 51 of the 60 monitored pairs hatched young and at least 51 young fledged; 13 of the 73 pairs were not monitored.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Confirmed (pairs)	47	16	4	20	34	8	10	8	20	19	81
Possible (pairs)	25	93	23	14	47	37	43	59	76	52	47
Max. total (pairs)	72	109	27	34	81	45	53	67	97	71	128

The high figures in 1985 are directly attributable to the fieldwork programme by the RSPB, but note that subsequent experience has indicated that some totals will have to be revised downwards. The RSPB study has already highlighted disturbance, egg-collecting and the destruction of habitat by agricultural activity as causes of the species' declining status.

### **Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus*

One locality: 1-2 individuals.

**England, SE** One locality.

**KENT** One locality: 1-2 between 14th May and 5th June.

This is the first time since 1982 that the Kentish Plover has featured in the Panel's report.

### **Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus*

19 localities: 14-27 pairs breeding.

**Scotland, S** One locality: seven on 4th May, presumed to be on passage, but habitat suitable for breeding.

**Scotland, Mid** Five localities: (1) male with two fledged young on 28th July; (2) three adults with two juveniles on 28th July; (3) two juveniles, but no adults, on 4th August; (4) four adults with two newly hatched young on 16th June; (5) party of eight on 5th May.

**Scotland, N & W** 13 localities: (1) six adults on 7th May, male with three young on 29th June; (2) two pairs on 20th May, 14 adults on 27th July, male with two large young on 17th August; (3) pair with eggs on 29th June; (4) male on 15th June; (5) 12 on 10th June, seven adults and three juveniles on 28th July; (6) pair reared young; (7) male with three eggs on 10th June; (8) two on 15th June; (9) adult with nest and one egg; (10) maximum of four on 4th September, probably bred; (11) pair with three eggs on 3rd July, male nearby with one young on 3rd July; (12) adult with two young on 19th June; (13) one on 25th May.

Although these data are still very incomplete, the picture is the most detailed which the Panel has been able to present for several years. Note that regular sites in northern England were covered, but no potential breeding Dotterels were located.

### **Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii*

Two localities: 0-2 pairs breeding.

**Scotland, N** Two localities: (1) two song-flighting during 6th-8th June; (2) one song-flighting on 1st May, 21st May and 4th June.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	1	2	3	3	4	5	1	3	1	1	2
Confirmed (pairs)	0	1	0	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	0
Possible (pairs)	2	3	5	5	4	5	1	2	2	1	2
Max. total (pairs)	2	4	5	6	6	6	1	3	2	1	2

The species' status in Britain, never very secure, seems to have been in decline for several years.

**Purple Sandpiper** *Calidris maritima*

Three localities: 1-3 pairs breeding.

**Scotland, Mid and N** Three localities: (1) two in display flight, no date mentioned; (2) pair bred, adult with three young on 22nd July and adult with one young on 27th July; (3) noisy pair, 2nd to 8th June, and adult on 20th June.

	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	3
Confirmed (pairs)	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
Possible (pairs)	0	0	0	1	0	1	1?	2
Max. total (pairs)	1	0	1	1	1	1	1-2	3

The year 1985 was the best for Purple Sandpiper since its first recorded nesting in Britain in 1978, with the first signs of range extension.

**Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax*

Six localities: no known case of breeding.

**England, SE** Three localities: (1) up to 20 until late April, reducing to two by 4th May; (2) 19 on 9th May; (3) one or two until 13th May. These records all relate to the same county.

**England, E** Three localities: (1) lekking observed from 18th April, with nine males and 11 females in a May census, but subsequently flooding would have thwarted any nesting attempt; (2) 18 in early May, with much display; (3) two males displaying to several females in early May.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	5	6	6	4	12	10	10	13	8	6	6
Nests	2	4	0	0	3	3	0	1	2	0	0
Max. no. ♀♀ possibly nesting	27	17	16	4	22	13	13	23	32	3-6	?

The location of the birds listed—in the south and east of England—make it possible (even probable) that all concerned were on passage to Scandinavia.

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*

Nine localities: 22-36 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** One locality: one pair bred.

**SOMERSET** One locality: up to three, one pair bred, but all disappeared about two weeks after hatching.

**England, SE** Two localities: (1) pair in April and May, outcome unknown; (2) pair bred, rearing two young.

**England, E** Five localities: 19-27 pairs breeding.

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE** Two localities: (1) three pairs fledged young, five pairs probably fledged young, four pairs failed due to predators, one pair deserted during severe frost; (2) four pairs, three of which were probably successful.

**LINCOLNSHIRE/SOUTH HUMBERSIDE** One locality: up to 17 from April to August; one juvenile in August, which may or may not have been bred locally.

**NORFOLK** One locality: six pairs, only one of which may have been successful because of mid-summer flooding.

**SUFFOLK** One locality: two pairs each reared three young, and third pair possibly bred.

**England, N** One locality.

**LANCASHIRE** One locality: three pairs summered, one of which known to have reared two young.



**Scotland, N** One locality.

SHETLAND One locality: pair and a third adult, but no young known to have been reared.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	10	13	11	13	13	11	5	13	10	12	10
Confirmed (pairs)	63	72	37	50	39	52	22	38	32	55	22
Possible (pairs)	8	15	33	18	25	25	4	31	12	25	14
Max. total (pairs)	71	87	70	68	64	77	26	69	44	80	36

Since most of the main sites are under regular observation, the low figures for 1985 can probably be taken at face value. There can be little doubt that species breeding in damp grasslands are very vulnerable to rainfall in May and June.

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*

The Panel now collects information about breeding on the Scottish mainland.

**Scotland, N** One locality: two adults at one regular site on 19th May, only one on 16th June and no sign of young.

There is no indication at present of any expansion from the main areas.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*

Three localities: 2-3 pairs breeding.

**Scotland, N** Three localities.

INVERNESS-SHIRE Three localities: (1) one or two on 20th May, three adults on 17th June, at least one pair bred; (2) present from 12th May to 14th July, one pair bred, with young seen from 9th to 28th June; (3) one on 21st May, not seen subsequently.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	5	3	4	7	3	4	1	4	3	4	3
Confirmed (pairs)	2	1	2	4	2	7	1	3	1	4	2
Possible (pairs)	4	2	3	6	2	5	0	3	4	1	1
Max. total (pairs)	6	3	5	10	4	12	1	6	5	5	3

Apart from occasional 'good' years, such as 1978 and 1980, numbers remain very low.

**Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus*

Five localities: 15-18 pairs breeding.

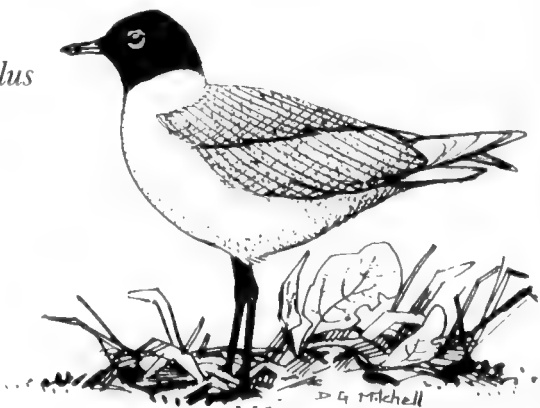
**Scotland, N & W** Five localities: (1) male on several occasions between 18th and 24th June at locality where up to ten are said to have been present in late May and early June; (2) pair from 18th to 24th June, male thought to be incubating; (3) female present from 25th May to 12th June; (4) 13 pairs hatched young; (5) two pairs.

A situation not greatly dissimilar to that in 1984.

**Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus*

Two localities in two counties: 3-6 pairs breeding.

**England, SE** Two localities: (1) five pairs, two thought not to have bred, the others with broods of 1, 2 and 3—five fledged; (2) pair present for long period in April, May and early June, but no sign of breeding.



	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	0	1	2	1	3	5	4	2	6	4	2
Confirmed (pairs)	0	1	1	0	2	1	3	2	2	4	3
Possible (pairs)	0	0	1	1	1	4	3	1	6	1	3
Max. total (pairs)	0	1	2	1	3	5	6	3	8	5	6

There are signs of a growing colony at one locality and this will probably provide a better base from which the species can extend its breeding range than would a number of single pairs or individuals in colonies of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*. Many of the pairs in the early years were, in fact, hybrid ones.

### **Roseate Tern** *Sterna dougallii*

The Panel now collects reports of Roseate Terns breeding away from the larger colonies.

**Scotland, S** One locality: two pairs reared four young.

This species is now the subject of regular monitoring.

### **Snowy Owl** *Nyctea scandiaca*

No male, but females summered.

**Scotland, N**

**SHETLAND** Three of four females summered, mostly on Fetlar and Unst.

With no males, the prospect is bleak.

### **Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*

Two localities: 0-2 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** One locality.

**DEVON** One locality: one calling daily from 14th to 24th May, and watched prospecting three potential nest holes.

**England, Central** One locality.

**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE** One locality: one calling on 30th June and 1st July.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	1	2	4	4	0	2	0	0	1	2	2
Confirmed (pairs)	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possible (pairs)	1	1	0	4	0	2	0	0	1	2	2
Max. total (pairs)	1	2	4	4	0	2	0	0	1	2	2

The Hoopoe is clearly a sporadic breeder in Britain and it would be interesting to know the circumstances which brought four pairs to breed here in 1977.

### **Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla*

Nine localities: 1-9 pairs breeding.

**Scotland, Mid & N** Nine localities.

**PERTSHIRE** One locality: one calling on 23rd June in apparently suitable breeding site.

**GRAMPIAN** One locality: five on 2nd June and three on 9th June, but not seen nor heard subsequently.

**INVERNESS-SHIRE** Seven localities: (1) one in desultory song on 15th and 16th June; (2)-(4) singles in late May and early June; (5) one singing from 23rd to 25th May apparently did not find mate; (6) pair feeding at least two young in hole in dead birch stump on 15th July, two fledged young being seen the following day; (7) one singing in June.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	10	7	17	22	7	11	2	9	14	9	9
Confirmed (pairs)	3	1	7	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Possible (pairs)	7	6	12	19	8	13	2	10	15	10	8
Max. total (pairs)	10	7	19	23	9	14	2	10	15	10	9

Those at the Inverness-shire locality number 6 were the first to have been proved breeding in Britain since 1980.

### Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

63 localities: 5-127 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** 11 localities: 2-53 pairs breeding.

CORNWALL Two localities: (1) one singing briefly; (2) one in full song over bulb field.

DEVON Five localities: (1) two adults and four juveniles on 19th May; (2) pair in breeding season, with two adults and four juveniles on 16th June; (3) two on 21st May; (4) one, singing frequently, from 28th January to 10th May; (5) one singing on 10th June.

HAMPSHIRE Three broad localities: (1) 16 pairs or singing males; (2) 23-24 pairs or singing males; (3) four pairs or singing males.

WILTSHIRE One locality: one singing on 8th April.

**England, SE** 15 localities: 0-33 pairs breeding.

BERKSHIRE Four localities: (1) one singing in April and May; (2) adult carrying food in June and adult and juvenile in July; (3) pair in May and July; (4) male singing in suitable habitat in May.

SURREY Ten localities: (1) two pairs; (2)-(5) three pairs at each; (6) four or five pairs; (7) ten pairs; (8)-(9) pair at each; (10) present, but numbers not reported.

SUSSEX One locality: agitated male, but no other evidence to suggest breeding.

**England, E** 37 localities.

NORFOLK 15 singing males; no indication of how many localities involved.

SUFFOLK Two broad localities: (1) 22 singing males; (2) about 15 pairs, of which at least two bred successfully. (One report for area evidently straddling Norfolk and Suffolk indicated 14 young fledged from four nests.)

The figures given above are considerably lower than those for 1984. It is too early to reach any conclusions, although a report from Suffolk comments that 'former breeding areas are now well overgrown as the young trees develop'.

### Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Five localities: 1-5 pairs breeding.

**England, SE** Four localities.

SUSSEX Four localities: (1)-(4) pair at each, at least one thought to have bred successfully.

**England, E** One locality.

SUFFOLK One locality: pair fledged four young.

We know that these data are incomplete and hope to publish further summaries next year.

### Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

Two localities: one pair breeding.

**Scotland, N** One locality: one pair reared two young.

**Scotland, Mid** One locality: male singing on 31st May, but not seen subsequently.

This is the first record of successful breeding for Britain. In



1968, a female was flushed from a nest with eggs, but no male was found. Bluethroats pass through Scotland every spring, en route to Scandinavia, and it may be significant that the spring passage in 1985 was of record proportions.

**Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris*

Three localities: 1-3 pairs breeding.

**England, SE** One locality.

KENT One locality: one on 14th and 23rd June.

**England, Central** One locality.

STAFFORDSHIRE One locality: one pair bred.

**Scotland, S** One locality.

BORDERS One locality: one fledged juvenile seen on 3rd June; down still showing on rump, flight weak, and movements 'unco-ordinated'. The recorder considers breeding in the locality to be still not proven, but adds that it was suspected in the general area in both 1983 and 1984.

**Addenda**

1984 BORDERS One locality: pair showing signs of maintaining territory, and agitated when seen on 29th and 30th April, but not located subsequently.

1984 POWYS One locality: female giving alarm call in suitable breeding area on 12th June, but not seen subsequently.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	10	11	6	3	6	5	6	7	10	4	3
Confirmed (pairs)	2	3	4	1	1	1	0	2	3	0	1
Possible (pairs)	8	9	2	3	5	4	6	5	9	4	2
Max. total (pairs)	10	12	6	4	6	5	6	7	12	4	3

If not hatched in the vicinity of where it was found, the Borders bird must surely have been reared in Britain. Even so, from the low 1985 figures, one must conclude that the Fieldfare has lost something of its momentum in the colonisation of Britain.

**Redwing** *Turdus iliacus*

32 localities: 11-33 pairs breeding.

**England, SE** One locality.

KENT One locality: one on 30th June.

**England, Central** One locality.

DERBYSHIRE One locality: one in full song on 18th May in typical habitat (mixture of pine *Pinus* plantation, birch *Betula* and rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum*).

**Scotland, Mid** One locality.

GRAMPLAN One locality: pair on 9th June in old birch wood, not seen subsequently.

**Scotland, N** 29 localities.

INVERNESS-SHIRE 21 localities: (1) pair feeding young in nest during 14th to 20th July; (2) pair feeding fledged young in July; (3) female feeding five young on 3rd July; (4) pair with five young; (5)-(6) pairs with three and four fledged young in June; (7) nest with five eggs on 11th June, young fledged on 3rd July; (8) nest with young in May; (9) agitated pair on 18th May; (10) two adults, one of them singing, on 23rd May; (11) male singing and mobbing Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*; (12) three singing males; (13) two singing males; (14)-(21) singles, mostly singing.

WESTER ROSS Six localities: (1) nest with four eggs on 16th May; (2) pair feeding together; (3) two singing males on 16th May and three individuals on 23rd May; (4) male singing from conifer plantation on 18th May; (5) male singing persistently on 22nd May; (6) singing male on 1st June.

SUTHERLAND Two localities: (1) adult collecting food; (2) male singing on 29th May.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	25	10	10	12	6	18	6	42	65	57	33
Confirmed (pairs)	13	3	2	3	2	7	4	30	17	31	11
Possible (pairs)	40	12	14	14	7	25	7	32	51	47	22
Max. total (pairs)	53	15	16	17	9	32	11	62	68	78	33

Although there are some grounds for thinking that the breeding population is reduced by cold winters (where do Scottish birds winter?), the chief reason for the apparent population fluctuations is variation in the amount of fieldwork. Two observers who normally supply much detailed information did not visit the breeding areas in 1985.

### Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

71 localities: 58-210 pairs breeding.

England, SW 44 localities: 54-156 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Cornwall	4	0	10	5	15
Devon	11	1	37	7	45
Dorset	2	48	0	0	48
Gloucestershire	2	1	0	1	2
Hampshire	15	2	33	0	35
Somerset	10	2	3	6	11

England, SE Nine localities: 4-27 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Essex	1	0	0	1	1
Hertfordshire	1	0	0	1	1
Kent	6	4	12	8	24
Sussex	1	0	0	1	1

England, E 18 localities: 0-27 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Cambridgeshire	1	0	1	0	1
Norfolk	15	0	23	0	23
Suffolk	2	0	1	2	3

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Counties	3	8	10	14	14	11	16	12	13	12	12
Confirmed (pairs)	8	8	13	30	46	19	56	29	90	78	58
Possible (pairs)	67	72	140	144	117	179	106	173	157	235	152
Max. total (pairs)	75	80	153	174	163	198	162	202	247	313	210

A comparison of the regional maxima for the two years 1984 and 1985 reveals in striking manner how much better Cetti's Warbler fares in the milder southwest: England, SW 157:156, England, SE 63:27, England, E 98:27

### Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

Six localities: 1-10 pairs breeding.

**England, SE** Two localities: (1) two territorial males, one pair breeding successfully; (2) male singing for three weeks in a regular site, but breeding not suspected.  
**England, E** Six localities: (1) pair probably bred; (2) male singing between 4th May and 1st July; (3) male singing on 16th June; (4) two males apparently holding territory; (5)-(6) singing male at each.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	3	8	13	15	15	14	8	11	12	10	8
Confirmed (pairs)	1	0	3	4	6	2	5	0	2	0	1
Possible (pairs)	2	9	23	24	24	27	10	18	15	12	9
Max. total (pairs)	3	9	26	28	30	29	15	18	17	12	10

The Savi's Warbler population now appears to be at its lowest level for ten years and in 1985 was confined to two counties.

**Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris***  
22 localities: 18-26 pairs breeding.

**England, SE** Six localities in two counties, two to six pairs breeding: (1) pair arrived on 25th May and fledged two young on 20th July; (2) pair arrived on about 17th June and fledged three, possibly four, young; (3) one singing on 25th May and 3rd June; (4) one singing on 27th May; (5) one singing from 8th to 30th June; (6) one singing on 30th June; breeding not suspected at localities 4, 5 or 6.

**England, E** One locality: 0-1 pair breeding.  
LINCOLNSHIRE/SOUTH HUMBERSIDE One locality: one singing on 3rd June at suitable locality which held singing male in 1983.

**England, Central** 15 localities: 16-19 pairs breeding.  
WORCESTERSHIRE 13 localities: (1)-(13) 16 or 17 pairs breeding plus 13 or 14 unmated males.  
DERBYSHIRE Two localities: (1) one singing from 29th May to 2nd June in rough herbage by stream; (2) one singing from 9th to 16th June in riverside reeds *Phragmites* and coarse vegetation with willows *Salix*.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	3	5	6	15	15	8	3	8	10	12	9
Confirmed (pairs)	0	0	2	4	1	2	0	2	3	4	2
Possible (pairs)	5	5	9	11	22	10	3	7	9	9	7
Max. total (pairs)	5	5	11	15	23	12	3	9	11	13	9

As in previous reports, the summary table omits records from the stronghold of the species. Detailed fieldwork in Worcestershire, where most sites were visited weekly, revealed a further reduction in the number of pairs breeding and the alarmingly high figure of 13 or 14 unmated males. It seems probable that most of those in other counties were also unmated males. The Panel is indebted to Martin Kelsey of the Edward Grey Institute for a detailed report on the position of the species in Worcestershire, where only seven breeding pairs and two or three unpaired males could be found in 1986.

**Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata***  
24 localities: 26-316 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** 16 localities.  
CORNWALL 11 localities: (1)-(6) pairs, and juveniles at some; (7)-(8) pairs in April; (9) one in April; (10) male singing on 15th April, female on 13th October; (11) one seen and others heard on 13th July.  
DEVON Two localities: (1) pair reared at least four young from two broods, and two unpaired males; (2) one, probably two, pairs bred and reared total of five young. (There were also many August to December records of adults and immatures along the southern coast.)

DORSET One locality: 18 or 19 pairs present and presumed to have bred.  
HAMPSHIRE Two extensive areas: (1) sample counts suggested a 4% increase in the population since 1984, despite the severe weather in February 1985; this gives an estimated population of 211 pairs; (2) eight to 11 pairs bred.  
**England, SE** Eight localities.  
SURREY Eight localities: (1) ten pairs; (2) four or five pairs, but area not well covered; (3) three pairs; (4)-(5) one pair at each; (6) 25 pairs; (7) 15 pairs; (8) two pairs. Recorder suggested a maximum decrease of one-third, despite severe weather in January and February 1985, and stated that breeding success was good at the main sites.

Despite the cold winter, the maximum total was the second-highest of recent years.



**Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapillus*  
24 localities: 5-44 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** Four localities: 1-6 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Devon	1	0	1	0	1
Gloucestershire	1	0	0	2	2
Somerset	1	1	0	0	1
Wiltshire	1	0	2	0	2

**England, SE** 12 localities: 0-25 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Bedfordshire	2	0	1	1	2
Berkshire	1	0	0	1	1
Buckinghamshire	3	0	8	2	10
Hertfordshire	2	0	1	1	2
Kent	4	0	6	4	10

**England, E** Six localities: 3-9 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Northamptonshire	1	0	0	1	1
Suffolk	5	3	0	5	8

**England, Central** One locality: 0-1 pair breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Shropshire	1	0	0	1	1

**Wales** One locality: 1-3 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Powys	1	1	0	2	3

#### Addendum

1983 POWYS One locality: male paired with female Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* reared 12 young from two broods (see *Ardea* 73: 191-192).

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	32	15	12	7	25	30	35	21	75	47	24
Confirmed (pairs)	4	4	2	1	9	7	15	4	6	4	5
Possible (pairs)	119	24	29	10	64	71	87	40	169	78	41
Max. total (pairs)	123	28	31	11	73	78	102	44	175	82	46

The Firecrest is a small species with a poor expectation of life, but a large clutch size. The marked differences between high and low points in the population level must be partly linked with differing overwinter survival.

#### Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

12 localities: 4-15 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** One locality: one pair, may have bred, but breeding not proved; a probable immature seen 3rd July.

**England, SE** Three localities: (1) pair on 27th May; (2) male from 27th May to 18th June; (3) immature male singing on 8th June.

**England, E** Seven localities: (1)-(2) adults and nests seen; (3) nest found only when leaves had fallen; (4) up to eight singing males in late May, but thought likely that only four or five pairs bred, four juveniles being seen on 30th July; (5) pair present in June; (6) pair together on 26th May, but breeding not suspected; (7) male singing on 3rd June.

**Scotland, Mid** One locality.

GRAMPIAN One locality: pair present in second half of June, female seen twice and male heard singing on several dates.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	4	11	16	14	17	17	13	12	14	10	12
Confirmed (pairs)	2	7	6	7	3	2	4	3	2	4	4
Possible (pairs)	5	16	15	21	27	26	22	18	21	13	11
Max. total (pairs)	7	23	21	28	30	28	26	21	21	17	15

The reduced numbers are largely attributable to habitat destruction in one of the main breeding areas.

#### Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

11 localities: 6-11 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** One locality: male singing on 20th June, but could not be located on subsequent visits.

**England, E** Eight localities: (1)-(2) pair bred at each; (3) pair reared five young; (4) pair reared four young; (5)-(6) pairs each reared three young; (7) male on 27th June; (8) male in ideal breeding habitat on 30th June. The Panel also has a report for this region of a minimum



of 22 young being reared by six pairs from seven nests: overlap with some of the foregoing records seems almost certain, but the strict confidentiality under which records are submitted at present prevents a resolution of the problem.

**Scotland, S** One locality: male 31st July and female from 2nd to 9th August; it is thought certain that they did not nest in the immediate vicinity, but could have summered, and perhaps have bred, nearby.

**Scotland, N** One locality: male in song on 28th May and 6th June, and present to 9th August.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Counties	7	5	13	11	10	5	6	2	3	4	6
Confirmed (pairs)	51	3	48	13	14	23	11	5	11	6	6
Possible (pairs)	5	22	16	24	38	8	29	3	1	4	5
Max. total (pairs)	56	25	64	37	52	31	40	8	17	10	11

An exceptionally good spring passage on parts of the East Coast may have contributed partly to the picture, but the population remains critically low. Only the breeding success—perhaps even better than the Panel has been able to indicate—holds out some promise for the future.

**Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla*

Three localities: 0-3 pairs breeding.

**England, SE** One locality.

ESSEX One locality: male on 28th June.

**Scotland, S** One locality.

BORDERS One locality: male in summer plumage sang briefly on 12th June, but not located thereafter.

**Scotland, N & W** One locality.

SUTHERLAND One locality: male sang on 4th June.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	0	0	2	2	3	3	1	10	8	10	3
Confirmed (pairs)	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	1	0
Possible (pairs)	0	0	3	2	3	4	0	8	7	8	3
Max. total (pairs)	0	0	3	2	4	4	1	10	8	9	3

A poor year, after three better ones, but a longer time-scale will be needed to detect trends.

**Serín** *Serinus serinus*

Four localities: 1-5 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** Three localities.

DEVON Three localities: (1) two males and one female from 8th April to August, only one brood (of 3) reared; (2) female on 27th April, immature on 3rd August and 11th and 13th October, and male and female on 28th October; (3) male singing at a former breeding site on 6th and 10th June.

**England, SE** One locality.

KENT One locality: nine bird-days between 1st April and 15th May, with singing males on 16th, 26th and 30th April, and females on other dates, then one female from 8th to 15th May.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
No. localities	0	2	0	4	0	1	3	5	7	4	4
Confirmed (pairs)	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	2	2	1
Possible (pairs)	0	2	0	3	0	1	4	6	5	3	4
Max. total (pairs)	0	2	0	4	0	1	6	7	7	5	5

A fifth relatively good year in the protracted process of colonisation.

**Parrot Crossbill** *Loxia pytyopsittacus*

Two localities: 1-2 pairs breeding.

**England, E** Two localities.

**NORFOLK** One locality: pair reared broods of 4 and 2.

**SUFFOLK** One locality: pair with two juveniles from 4th to 21st April, and the adult male to at least 12th May; thought probable that the pair bred at the site, where breeding was suspected in 1984.

This was the third successive year in which breeding was proved or strongly suspected in Britain.

**Scarlet Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus*

One locality.

**Scotland, N** One locality: male singing in very suitable habitat on 14th June, where the species was also present in 1984.

The only confirmed breeding record in Britain to date was in 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 133-135).

**Snow Bunting** *Plectrophenax nivalis*

12 localities: 3-15 pairs breeding.

**Scotland, Mid and N & W** 12 localities: (1) pair on 2nd June; (2) five singing males on 29th June, pair with three fledged young on 22nd July, male feeding one young on 27th July; (3) pair feeding young in nest on 25th July; (4) pair on 11th May; (5)-(6) singing male at each on 8th June; (7) singing male on 10th June; (8) singing male on 19th June; (9) two singing males on 13th July; (10) singing male on 14th July; (11) two or three singing males on 20th June; (12) one on 30th May.

For the second successive year, we are able to publish a rather fuller—although doubtless still incomplete—report. The Panel is grateful to (as well as envious of!) the seven fieldworkers who covered the high tops.

**Girl Bunting** *Emberiza cirrus*

57 localities: 4-57 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** 56 localities.

**CORNWALL** Two localities: (1) pair carrying caterpillar into clump of brambles *Rubus* and second male in next field; (2) singing male on 21st April.

**DEVON** 45 localities: (1)-(45) pair at each. No records from several traditional sites, but this could reflect lack of coverage.

**AVON** One locality: first located on 26th May, three fledged young on 24th July.

**SOMERSET** Eight localities: (1) pair feeding young in June and July; (2) singing male near to locality 1 on 1st June; (3) three males and one female on 2nd February, single males on 30th March and 4th July; (4) singing male on 4th July; (5) singing male from 9th April to 18th May; (6) pair with fledged young on 15th June; (7)-(8) single males on 20th April and 26th May respectively.

**England, SE** One locality.

**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE** One locality: one, sex not reported, on 23rd May at locality where breeding has occurred in recent years.

These figures suggest a further decline from the 0-69 pairs in 1984.

# Identification pitfalls and assessment problems

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This series, which started in January 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 26-28), is not intended to cover all facets of the identification of the species concerned, but only the major sources of error likely to mislead the observer in the field or the person attempting to assess the written evidence. The species concerned are mostly those which were formerly judged by the Rarities Committee\*, but which are now the responsibility of county and regional recorders and records committees.

## 9. Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

The Ring-billed Gull was first recorded in Britain in 1973 and between then and the end of 1986 the British and Irish total had reached over 500 records. In the last three of those years, it was occurring here at the rate of almost 80 records a year. It is now so numerous that records after 31st December 1987 will no longer be considered by the Rarities Committee. Despite its current abundance, it is still unfamiliar inland and on the East Coast, and records continue to show a strong westerly bias. Also, the rejection rate remains high (25% in 1986) and it is clear that some observers have been jumping on the bandwagon. The purpose of this article is, therefore, to summarise the main identification characters and



64. Adult winter Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* moulting to adult summer, Florida, USA, February 1986 (J. B. & S. Bottomley)

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\*This paper, like those earlier in the series (*Brit. Birds* 76: 26-28, 78-80, 129-130, 203-206, 304-305, 342-346; 77: 412-415; 78: 97-102), is a publication of the Rarities Committee, which is sponsored by ZEISS West Germany.

Adult winter Ring-billed

Adult winter Common

First-winter Common (upper two)  
and Ring-billed (lower one)

First-winter Common

(Note different  
median-covert  
patterns)

First-winter  
Ring-billed

First-summer  
Ring-billed

Second-winter  
Herring

First-summer  
Common

Fig. 1. Ring-billed *Larus delawarensis*, Common *L. canus* and Herring Gulls *L. argentatus*  
(Alan Harris)



65. First-winter Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Florida, USA, March 1981 (Jórgen Palmgren)

to provide local bird report records committees with a useful reference.

Although the identification of the Ring-billed Gull has been dealt with very thoroughly elsewhere (particularly by P. J. Grant in his second edition of *Gulls—a guide to identification*, 1986), it is surprising how many observers continue to regurgitate standard text book clichés when describing this species, and many records, although superficially adequate, fail to inspire confidence. The following would be a typical example: 'I saw a gull feeding with Herring Gulls *L. argentatus*\* on a rubbish tip. It was smaller than Herring Gull, larger than Common Gull *L. canus*, had a ring around its bill and yellow legs. The head was very angular and a conspicuous pale eye gave it a very fierce expression.' On a process of elimination, this bird more or less had to be a Ring-billed Gull, but the lack of detail and some unconventional emphasis renders the description peculiarly unconvincing. Poor descriptions, such as this, are surprisingly common and, in such cases, the Rarities Committee has tended to err on the side of caution and reject the record. It must be stressed that the Ring-billed Gull is a difficult species, and a detailed description is a prerequisite to acceptance. The following notes set out the main identification features.

### Size, structure and behaviour

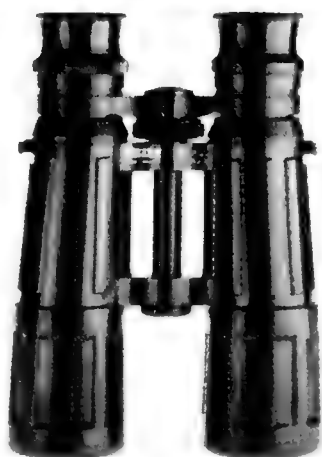
The Ring-billed Gull is always conspicuously smaller than the majority of

\*All references to Herring Gull relate to *L. a. argentatus*.

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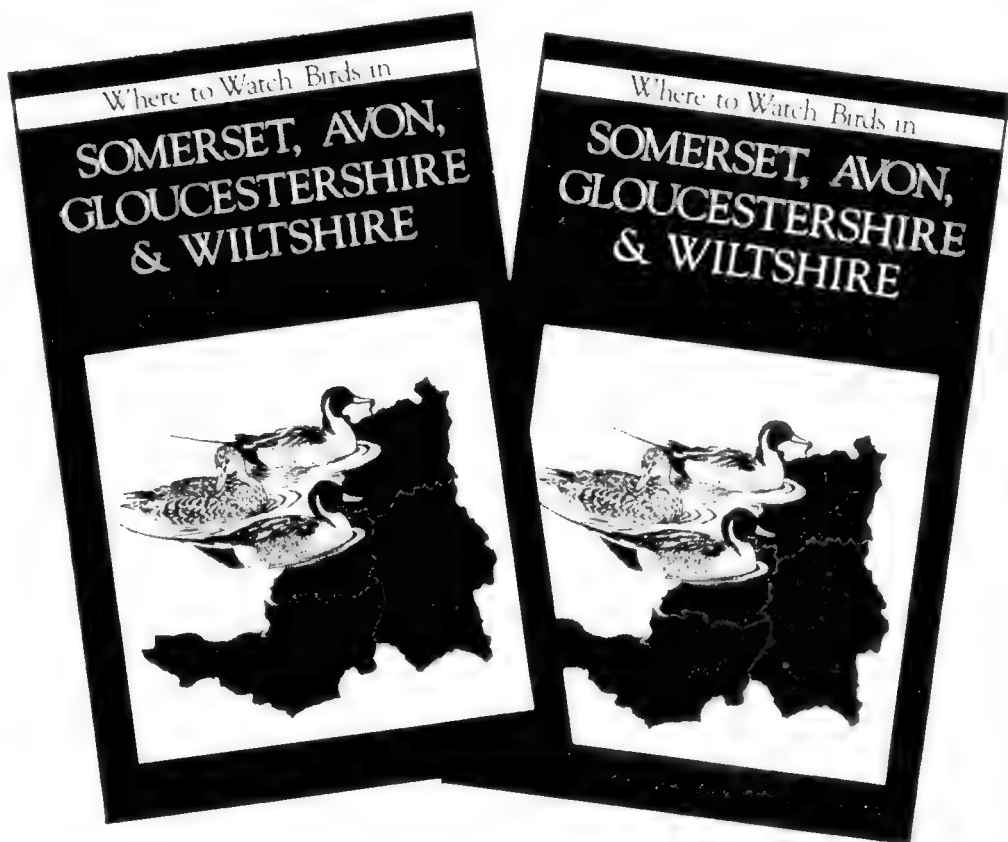
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Fig. 2. Ring-billed *Larus delawarensis* and Common Gulls *L. canus* (Alan Harris)

Herring Gulls, and it basically resembles a big Common Gull. The size of all three species varies, however, and some male Ring-billeds are noticeably larger than most Common Gulls, while small females are about the same size. To be valid, comparisons should always be made with *several* individuals of the commoner species. Ring-billed is slightly different structurally, looking bulkier, stockier and deeper-chested, while on the water it looks flat-backed, sleek and attenuated compared with Common Gull. The most obvious structural difference is the bill, which looks longer, noticeably thicker and more 'parallel'. This effect is apparent even at a distance, when the black band (or tip) makes the bill appear rather blunt. The head is slightly more angular, less rounded than that of Common Gull, but this feature has been over-emphasised and the head shape depends largely on attitude; when relaxed, Ring-billed can look quite round-headed. The size difference may look more obvious in flight, when Ring-billed looks distinctly longer and broader-winged than Common. The wing tips are more pointed than those of Common, but on adults and second-years this is emphasised by differences in wing-tip pattern (see below). The legs of Ring-billed are often noticeably longer than those of Common, resulting in a strutting walk which may recall that of Mediterranean Gull *L. melanocephalus*. Ring-billed Gulls are often attracted to man and may become very tame at favoured feeding sites.

### Adults

The important point to remember is that winter adult and second-year Common Gulls, and also second-year and third-year Herring Gulls, often

66. First-winter Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Cornwall, February 1982 (S. C. Hutchings)





67. Second-winter Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Cornwall, February 1979 (W. R. Hirst)

show a prominent, clear-cut ring on the bill. It would, therefore, be unusual to pick out a Ring-billed Gull by its bill ring. The best way to pick out an adult or a second-year at rest is by a combination of mantle colour and tertial and wing-tip patterns. The mantle is noticeably paler than that of Common Gull, being closer in shade to that of Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*, while the tertials look rather square and lack the Common's conspicuous broad white crescent. At close range, the tertial tips on a Ring-billed *are* whiter, but they are narrow and do not contrast with the paler mantle. The closed primaries look uniformly black, with three inconspicuous white primary tips which decrease in size towards the wing tips. The pale mantle and black primaries, unrelieved by an obvious white tertial crescent, produce a pattern which is quite distinct from that shown by adult Common Gull, and is, in fact, quite similar to that of adult Black-headed Gull. Two pitfalls need to be considered: (1) unusually pale Common Gulls do exist and (2) second-year Commons often show a narrow tertial crescent and little white in the primaries. Make sure, therefore, that an 'adult Ring-billed' is not actually a second-year Common.

To avoid such pitfalls, it is absolutely essential for the identification to be confirmed by reference to other features. The structural differences, outlined above, are especially important; and pay particular attention to the bill. The black band should stand out clearly and cleanly and contrast with the pale base, even in winter. Eye colour is diagnostic. Ring-billed has pale irides (as well as a narrow orange orbital ring), but the pale eye is

surprisingly difficult to detect at any distance. Instead, Ring-billed usually shows a squint-eyed expression, in contrast to the dark-eyed, open-faced look of a Common Gull. Ring-billed tends to have paler, mottled head streaking, but this is so variable on Common Gull as to render it of limited value in the field. Ring-billed tends to have yellower legs.

If a suspected Ring-billed flies or wing-flaps, an observer should concentrate on the wing-tip pattern. Common has two large, conspicuous white mirrors right across the wing tip, but, on Ring-billed, the mirrors are small, relatively inconspicuous and are often confined to just one mirror on the inner web of the outer primary. This relative lack of white emphasises the more pointed wing shape. The pale mantle and wings contrast strongly with the black primary wedges so that, in flight, Ring-billed's pattern looks surprisingly similar to that of a Herring Gull. The very white underwings reinforce this impression.

### Second-years

Similar to adult, but easily aged by the presence of dark feathering on the primary coverts. Most second-years show vestigial black markings in the tail and, sometimes, the secondaries. Many, however, lack these markings, while, conversely, some second-year Commons also show them. Ring-billed shows only a small white mirror on the inner web of the outer primary, and this is often difficult to see. In contrast, second-year Common shows one or two obvious white mirrors. The age at which Ring-billed develops adult bare-part colouring varies, but most attain a complete bill band and a yellow base by their first-summer, although some still retain a black tip and/or a greenish base a year later. Similarly, eye colour varies, and some remain dark-eyed into their second summer.

### First-years

This age is the most difficult to identify, as many of the subtle differences are inconsistent. First-year Ring-billeds have a distinctive 'jizz' *once learnt*, but they should always be identified by a *combination* of minor differences. Close views and detailed notes are essential, and the observer should always bear in mind the possible occurrence of odd Common Gulls (for example, unusually pale individuals). All the following features (listed in rough order of importance) should be checked:

(1) BILL. The best character, being heavy, thick, 'parallel' and blunt-ended. In comparison, Common's bill looks slender, pointed and weedy. That of Ring-billed is usually pale orangy-pink with a prominent black tip, reminiscent of the bill of a first-year Glaucous Gull *L. hyperboreus*. Some Commons have a similar bill colour, but many have a duller, grey or greenish base.

(2) TERTIALS Solidly dark brown, *narrowly* edged white. On Common, they are paler brown, with thick white edgings, but beware of the effects of abrasion.

(3) MANTLE AND SCAPULARS Pale grey, lacking the dark 'saddle' effect of Common. Whitish tips to many of the scapulars and the retention of some dark juvenile feathering may create a more variegated pattern than on Common, but the dark feathers are moulted and the pale tips wear off as the winter progresses.

(4) GREATER COVERTS Usually appear pale grey on Ring-billed, sometimes barred on the inners (unlike Common), and produce a pale strip along the bottom of the closed wing and a noticeable pale mid-wing panel in flight.



68. Juvenile Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, North Dakota, USA, August 1980 (E. J. Mackrill)

(5) HEAD AND UNDERPARTS Ring-billed is usually well mottled and spotted about the head and breast and more heavily marked below, often with heavy dark barring or spotting on the upper- and undertail-coverts, which Commons usually lack. Both species are, however, variable.

(6) TAIL The dark of the tail band usually extends up the outer web of each tail feather to intrude into the tail base, which usually shows delicate greyish mottling or shading. The tail, therefore, looks messy compared with the clear-cut band and white base of most Commons. On some Commons, however, the dark also intrudes into the white, while a minority also show grey mottling at the base, so the differences are not absolute. Ring-billed has dark mottling or barring on the outer web of the outer tail feather, which Common seems to lack.

(7) MEDIAN COVERTS In fresh plumage, the brown centres to the median coverts are pointed on Ring-billed, but rounded on Common, but this distinction breaks down with wear and fading and is of little use in worn plumage.

(8) LEGS Sometimes quite pink on first-year Ring-billed.

In their first summer, both species fade and bleach and eventually replace their wing-coverts and tertials with grey second-winter plumage. First-summer Commons look washed out and pale, their outer primaries and secondaries fading to brown and the rest of their wing becoming creamy and worn, contrasting conspicuously with their dark grey 'saddle', particularly in flight. Ring-billed also fades, but, because it lacks the dark 'saddle', the mantle and wing-coverts look uniformly pale grey and concolorous. Unlike Common, first-year Ring-billed soon gains a pale bill tip and, by first-summer, the bill is usually similar to that of an adult.

### Juveniles

Similar to first-winter, but mantle and scapulars brown, edged white, and

head and underparts also heavily marked. Full juvenile has never been recorded in Britain and Ireland.

### The Herring Gull problem

First-year and second-year Ring-billeds may be confused with second-year and third-year Herring Gulls respectively, both of which can show a prominent bill band. Herring Gull should, however, always appear large, bulky, angular-headed, heavy-billed and meaner-looking. If in doubt, check the wing-coverts. Second-year Herring shows noticeable brown *barring* across the wing-coverts (including the greater coverts), which first-year Ring-billed lacks. In addition, second-year Herring shows rather mottled tertials and, usually, a pale eye. In flight, second-year Herring Gull shows fairly uniform grey inner primaries, producing a grey pale 'window' extending to the tips of the feathers; first-year Ring-billed Gull has dark sub-terminal marks on these feathers. Third-year Herrings are also easily separated as they retain traces of dark mottling on the wing-coverts, vestiges of immaturity that second-year Ring-billed would never exhibit. In addition, third-year Herring would have pinkish legs, whereas second-year Ring-billed would show greenish or yellowish legs.

### Treatment in bird reports

It is hoped to analyse the patterns of records of this species periodically in *British Birds*, so it is important that report editors publish dates in full and use accurate ageing terminology: individuals left unaged, first-summers shown as 'second-summers' and references to 'immatures' will not be appreciated by those who undertake the analyses.

KEITH VINICOMBE

11 Kennington Avenue, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 9EU

## Mystery photographs

**129** The bird shown in plates 38 and 69 immediately suggests a lark or bunting: short conical bill, streaked upperparts and general stubby appearance. The long tertials cloak the primaries, indicating that it is a pipit or a bunting. The open, sandy habitat favours the view that it is a lark. Further, the tail is rather too short (compared with the wings) for a bunting, and is apparently square, or even rounded, whereas most buntings show a slight fork. This leaves us with the larks.

No trace of a crest is visible, eliminating the skylarks *Alauda* and the crested larks *Galerida*. The absence of pronounced markings on breast and wings suggests a *Calandrella* or *Ammomanes*, or the closely-related Dunn's Lark *Eremalauda dunni*; larks in the genus *Melanocorypha* either have dark neck patches (e.g. Calandra *M. calandra* and Bimaculated *M. bimaculata*) or white wing marks (e.g. White-winged *M. leucoptera*), while



the female Black Lark *M. yeltoniensis* has extensive streaking on breast and flanks.

The stance, chubby shape and streaky upperparts of the mystery bird suggest a Short-toed *Calandrella brachydactyla* or Lesser Short-toed Lark *C. rufescens*, and the outer tail-feather looks darker than the central pair, perhaps with a pale fringe: features shown by both of these species. Lesser Short-toed seems the more likely, since the bird lacks a small dark patch on the side of the neck, which is usually present in Short-toed. Instead, faint streaking on the upper breast appears to extend a little down the sides near the fold of the wing, recalling Lesser Short-toed.

In contrast, *Ammomanes* larks have almost unstreaked upperparts, while the tail either shows a dark bar (Bar-tailed Desert Lark *A. cincturus*) or the central tail feathers are somewhat darker than the outers (Desert Lark *A. deserti*). Further, *Ammomanes* larks and Dunn's Lark usually exhibit a longer-legged, more slender-bodied aspect. The face markings do, however, present difficulties with a diagnosis as Lesser Short-toed Lark. The mystery bird appears to have a light eye-ring and a supercilium extending over the ear-coverts, underlined by a dark rim and streak. There are also traces of a dark malar stripe and a dark moustachial stripe. Lesser Short-toed does have an indistinct pale eye-stripe and streaking on the lores and ear-coverts, but these do not form the rather distinctive markings seen in the photograph. Such markings are, however, a prominent feature of Dunn's Lark, and are among the first characters which strike the eye when confronted by the latter species. The bird in the photograph, taken by John Palfery in Saudi Arabia in January 1985, is indeed a Dunn's Lark.

Plates 38 and 71 show the bird in a rather atypical stance, when it could well be taken for a Lesser Short-toed. In the field, however, the pinkish-sandy coloration of the western race *dunni* resembles an *Ammomanes* rather than a *Calandrella* (though the eastern race *eremodites* is







70. Dunn's Lark *Eremalauda dunni*, Saudi Arabia, January 1985 (John Palfery)



71. Dunn's Lark *Eremalauda dunni*, Saudi Arabia, November 1983 (John Palfery)

72. Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens* approaching nest, Jordan, April 1965 (Eric & David Hosking)



greyer), and in life the streaking is less obvious than in a black-and-white print. Further, Dunn's Lark more typically adopts the stance shown by the second photograph (plate 70), when it resembles an *Ammomanes*. The light streaking on upperparts and upper breast, head markings (which give the impression of a large, staring eye) and tail pattern, however, should distinguish it from both species of *Ammomanes*. Black outer margins to the tail contrast with reddish-brown central feathers, and Dunn's Lark does not show the extensive pure white on the outer edges of the outer tail feathers which is so obvious on Lesser Short-toed Lark. A further useful field character, not obvious in the photographs, is the large, rather bright, yellow-orange bill, noticeably larger than that of an *Ammomanes*, and resembling that of a Calandra Lark.

This little-known species was previously featured in a PhotoSpot (*Brit. Birds* 78: 42) and its identification was discussed by P. D. Round and T. A. Walsh (*Sandgrouse* 3: 78-83).

ALAN TYE

2 School Lane, King's Ripton, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE17 2NL

73. Mystery photograph 130. Identify the species. Answer next month



# Announcements

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**Young Ornithologists of the Year** Once again, *British Birds* was the sponsor of this annual competition, which is run by the Young Ornithologists' Club, the junior section of the RSPB. The general standard of entries in the intermediate age-group and, especially, the senior age-group was even higher than usual, and this is reflected by the judges' decision to list several runners-up, as well as the winners. Entries in the junior age-group, however, were many fewer and of a lower standard than in past years, probably as a result of the increasing emphasis which the judges have placed on *field* observations and *field* notebooks.

The winners and runners-up were as follows:

SENIOR (13-18 years old)	<b>1st Paul Salaman (Raynes Park, London)</b> 2nd Guy Thompson (Malmesbury, Wiltshire) 3rd Paul Mead (Ilford, Essex) 4th Howard T. Vaughan (Ilford, Essex) 5th Eric Ford (Southport, Merseyside) 6th Christopher R. Drake (Dorchester, Dorset) 7th Clive Maxwell (Billericay, Essex)
INTERMEDIATE (10-12 years old)	<b>1st Oscar Campbell (Lurgan, Co. Armagh)</b> 2nd David Anning (Deal, Kent) 3rd James Shand (Dulwich, London) 4th Jane Reid (Yarm, Cleveland)
JUNIOR (6-9 years old)	NO FIRST PRIZE AWARDED Consolation prize: Colin Mackenzie (Roy Bridge, Inverness-shire)

The two winners, Paul Salaman and Oscar Campbell, will each receive a free one-year subscription to *British Birds* and £65-worth of bird books or equipment of their choice. They (and also the second in the high-quality Senior Section, Guy Thompson) will be presented with their prizes at a special ceremony. The runners-up will all receive an inscribed book as a small token of their achievement.

*British Birds* is delighted to continue sponsorship of this competition, aimed at encouraging young birdwatchers to take their hobby seriously. The Young Ornithologists' Club fosters a responsible attitude among those who are destined to become future ornithologists and conservationists, and we urge all readers of *BB* to encourage young birdwatchers whom they may know to join the YOC. The address is YOC, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL. The club produces an excellent magazine, *Bird Life*, edited by Rob Hume, which recently won the top award as 'Consumer Periodical of the Year' (*Brit. Birds* 80: 390).

**Bird Illustrator of the Year 1988** The closing date for submission of entries for this annual competition, sponsored by KONA telescopes, is 14th March 1988. The full rules were published on page 32 of the January issue.

**Change of address of 'BB' binders** Chapman Brooks Bookbinders Ltd have moved to 173 Elmers End Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 4SZ (telephone 01-650 5202).

**'Seabirds' delay** Christopher Helm has informed us that, owing to extraordinary demand, *Seabirds: an identification guide* has gone out of print temporarily; new stocks should be available in early June.

**New items in British BirdShop** This month, we have added the following items:

Kettle *British Bird Songs and Calls* (2-cassette pack + booklet)

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The following special offers are also still available this month: (1) The 'British Birds' Christopher Helm Collection; (2) 'BWP'; (3) *The Birds of Africa*; (4) *Crows of the World*; (5) *An Atlas of Birds of the Western Palearctic*; and (6) *Frontiers of Bird Identification*.

Please use the British BirdShop forms on pages vii & viii.

# Seventy-five years ago...

'For a considerable time past there has been a general impression that some of our summer migrants have been decreasing in numbers, and that in some districts certain species which were common a few years ago are becoming less common every year.' (*Brit. Birds* 6: 296, March 1913)

## News and comment

*Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch*

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

**US Chough** Hard on the heels of the November report of a Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* in Co. Kerry comes news (from Dr Noble Proctor in Connecticut) of a Chough *Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax* at large in New England. The chances of either bird having crossed the Atlantic other than with ship assistance must be remote, and in the case of the Chough an escape from captivity seems more likely. Whatever actually happened, no doubt the old arguments about ship-assisted passage will all surface again, and the usual questions about admission to 'Lists' will certainly crop up. You may well say, perhaps with some justification, 'Who cares anyway?' You may even feel, as the late Ken Williamson did, that the concept of a 'National List' is wholly unimportant; or, on the other hand, you may be a stickler for the 'rules' of such things. Despite the BCU Records Committee guidelines (that ships are now a part of the environment), the generally held view among birders is that 'ship-assisted' birds 'don't count'—even if it does seem somewhat illogical that a bird which is lucky enough to survive because it finds a ship in mid ocean is somehow worth less consideration than one which makes it

across under its own steam. All this seems even more like purism gone mad when you think that any bird arriving in Scilly in autumn will be 'counted', on the theory that transatlantic vagrancy does happen; whether some of these birds actually hitched a ride on the way over seems to be conveniently forgotten.

**Norman Moore's book a winner** A new award, 'The *Natural World* Book of the Year Award', has been won by Dr Norman Moore's *The Bird of Time: the science and politics of nature conservation*, published by Cambridge University Press. As one of the judges, Dr Franklyn Perring, says in the Royal Society for Nature Conservation's magazine, *Natural World*, 'The subtitle . . . suggests heavy going but Professor Moore has a light touch . . . the judges were unanimous in believing that here was a book they could recommend to all readers of *Natural World*.'

**Question** What was David Tomlinson trying to photograph in Georgia, USA, in September 1987? (Answer on next page.)



**Relief for Strangford** At a time when so many vitally important estuary sites are heavily threatened on all sides, it makes a pleasant change to record a 'plus' situation at Strangford Lough, Co. Down. This has come about, as it happens, in several ways. First, and most importantly, a tidal barrage scheme has been rejected, basically it seems on economic grounds, though the RSPB was quick to point out to the Northern Ireland Environment Minister, Richard Needham, the wisdom of his decision on environmental grounds. Next, a scheme to set up a vast salmon-rearing project in the lough was turned down; and, finally, a proposal to reclaim parts of the mudflats at the northern end of the area was thrown out too. While all this was happening, the National Trust, with support from its own Enterprise Neptune Fund, the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland and the World Wildlife Fund, were able to buy the important Greyabbey Bay and islands area, where they had already held shooting rights and a lease of the foreshore; then the DoE's Countryside and Wildlife Branch established a small National Nature Reserve at this northern end, which, perhaps, will grow in size in the years ahead. All this is excellent and reassuring news for an area which meets the criteria for designation as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention and as a Special Protection Area under the European Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds: it holds thousands of winter waders and also the bulk of the pale-bellied Brent Geese *Branta bernicla hrota* wintering in the UK—some 15,000 of them. Perhaps it is not too much to hope that these designations will be made formally in the near future?

**Goodbye to the Middle-Thames NHS** The Middle-Thames Natural History Society,

founded in 1947 (with the title 'Slough Natural History Society'), was disbanded at the end of October 1987, following a special general meeting. Many ornithologists and naturalists in the parts of Buckinghamshire and Berkshire previously covered by the Society will owe a debt of gratitude to the succession of officers and recorders who, by their volunteer labours, have helped to foster interest in, and study of, natural history over the years.

**Good news from Somerset** We were very pleased to learn that the traditional practice of flooding Southlake Moor (a 200-ha SSSI on the Somerset Levels) is to continue after all, reversing an earlier decision to the contrary. This is an internationally important wet grassland site, which, amongst other things, holds very large numbers of wintering Bewick's Swans *Cygnus columbianus* and Wigeons *Anas penelope* and is of very high value for its breeding populations of Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Curlew *Numenius arquata* and Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*. Flooding is vital to the well-being of this site, and the Othery, Middlezoy and Westonzoyland Internal Drainage Board is to be congratulated on its change of heart. As the Nature Conservancy Council has been quick to point out, this is an excellent example of how conservation and farming interests *can* work together.

**Changes of Recorders** The new recorder for the old county of Huntingdon (now part of Cambridgeshire, but bird-recorded separately) is John Clark, 7 Westbrook, Hilton, Huntingdon, Cambs PE18 9NW. Nick Dymond, East House, South Whiteness, Shetland ZE2 9LL, has taken over from Dennis Coutts as Recorder for Shetland (except Fair Isle).



**Answer**

This Sanderling  
*Calidris alba*.

# November reports

---

*Keith Allsopp and Ian Dawson*

**These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records.  
Unless otherwise stated, dates refer to November 1987.**

*An anticyclone covered Britain and Ireland during the first week, with resulting quiet and mild conditions. From 8th, westerly cyclonic weather ensued as the pressure declined. The dominant warm, wet, westerly air was, however, replaced by much colder Arctic air after 21st, when an anticyclone developed over the mid Atlantic. The northerly winds turned to northeast in the following days, after which calm, foggy, frosty weather became established on 28th, as high pressure dominated the weather once more.*

## Hapless victims of nature

**Little Auks** *Alle alle* always give the impression of vulnerability to the forces of nature, be they weather or predators, but they are successful in their own habitat in the Arctic. Normally feeding in cold, plankton-rich waters, they avoid the warmer waters of the Gulf Stream. The occasional influx into the North Sea, caused by severe wind conditions, as repeatedly occurred this autumn, driving them southeastwards from their feeding grounds off Greenland, may trap them in unsuitable feeding areas, where they become progressively weaker. Several thousands probably arrived in the North Sea in late October, when a few were seen close inshore. In early November, 50 to 60 per hour were seen passing Sumburgh Head (Shetland), 600 were seen at Fifeness (Fife) on 8th, and onshore winds brought counts of up to 300 at Flamborough (Humberside) on 9th. Easterly winds did not return until 23rd, when 1,700 was the peak count at

76. Little Auk *Alle alle*, Covenham Reservoir, Lincolnshire, November 1987 (Keith Atkin)



Hartlepool (Cleveland), with 1,000 being seen both at nearby Seaton Sluice and at Whitburn (Northumberland). Some ten were found inland (plates 76 & 77), but few were seen on the west coast.



77. Little Auk *Alle alle*, Huttoft, Lincolnshire, November 1987 (Michael Tarrant)

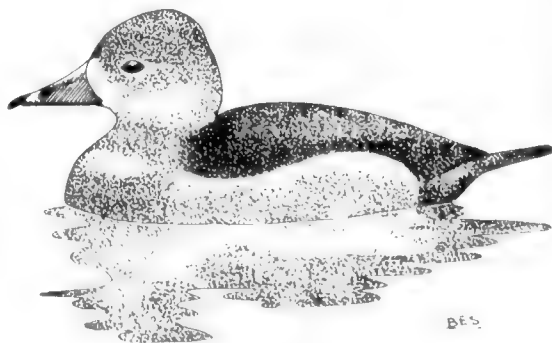
#### Divers to herons

Very few divers were found inland, and the only notable report was of a **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* flying past Spurn Point (Humberside) on 1st. A **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* remained at Kenfig Pool (Mid Glamorgan) throughout the month, four single **Red-necked Grebes** *Podiceps gris-gena* were found in southeast England from mid month, and a concentration of eight **Black-necked Grebes** *P. nigricollis* was reported in early November on Staines Reservoir (Middlesex). A **Storm Petrel** *Hydrobates pelagicus* was a late stayer in Shetland on 2nd, and several **Leach's Petrels** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* were seen inshore, mainly on western coasts, with one found inland at the Cotswold Water Park (Wiltshire) on 15th. A **Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* was an unusual garden bird at East Rudham (Norfolk) on 14th.

#### Wildfowl

Single **Bewick's Swans** *Cygnus columbianus* were rare visitors to Shetland (including Fair Isle) on 26th, as the wintering wildfowl continued to arrive. By 25th, 34 **Bean Geese** *Anser fabalis* had arrived at Buckenham (Norfolk), 26,000 **Pink-footed Geese** *A. brachyrhynchus* were estimated to be in South-east Scotland, and 11,400 **Barnacle Geese** *Branta leucopsis* were at Caerlaverock (Dum-

fries & Galloway), 120 of the last species visiting Upper Bittel Reservoir (Worcestershire) on 16th. Three **American Wigeons** *Anas americana* stayed throughout the month in Ireland, and two reports came from southern England, at Lodmoor (Dorset) until 13th and in the Reading (Berkshire) area from 21st; also, a **Garganey** *A. querquedula* was still to be found on Belfast Lough (Co. Down) throughout the month. Records of **Red-crested Pochards** *Netta rufina* have been increasing annually, and eleven reports this month is no longer exceptional. A brief visit to Drift Reservoir (Cornwall) by a **Canvasback** *Aythya valisineria* sent pulses racing on 15th. Three **Ring-necked Ducks** *A. collaris* included a female at Cheddar Reservoir (Somerset) from mid







78 & 79. Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, Co. Kerry, November 1987 (Richard T. Mills)



month. Four **Ferruginous Ducks** *A. nyroca* were reported. Among the 20,000 Eiders *Somateria mollissima* counted off Tayport (Tayside) on 21st, there was a splendid drake **King Eider** *S. spectabilis*, and **Surf Scoters** *Melanitta perspicillata* were noted at Rattray Head (Grampian), with one on 9th, and at Strumble Head (Dyfed), with four on 13th. The usual wildfowl 'tickability' problem concerned many watchers of a **Barrow's Goldeneye** *Bucephala islandica* at Wheldrake Ings (South Yorkshire) from 2nd to 14th: was it wild or an escape?

#### Raptors to cranes

A juvenile **Bald Eagle** *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* at Castleisland (Co. Kerry), from 17th into December (plates 78 & 79), provided both identification and listing problems, until it was returned to the USA by courtesy of *Aer Lingus*.

At Tregaron (Dyfed), 34 **Red Kites** *Mikvus mikus* were the estimated wintering popula-



tion, and a single was seen at Wickham Market (Suffolk) on 1st. Also at Tregaron was a **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* on 21st and five **Hen Harriers** *Circus cyaneus*. The only report of a **Rough-legged Buzzard** *Buteo lagopus* was from Woodwalton Fen (Cambridgeshire). After this autumn's influx, one more **Spotted Crane** *Porzana porzana* was seen at Pagham Harbour (West Sussex) on 2nd, and a **Crane** *Grus grus* stayed at Caerlaverock during the month.

### Waders

The autumn wader passage dwindled to a trickle. A **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* was still on Hayle Estuary (Cornwall) on 1st, and a **Purple Sandpiper** *C. maritima* was inland at Pitsford Reservoir (Northamptonshire) on 13th. Yet another **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* was found on Fair Isle, on 6th, and the numbers of vagrant **Long-billed Dowitchers** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* this autumn grew, with another five sightings. A **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* was seen at Sandwich Bay (Kent) on 22nd, and a **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* remained at Staines Reservoir until 8th.

### Skuas, gulls and terns

A late **Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longi-*

*caudus* was seen at Cheddar Reservoir (Somerset) on 29th, and **Great Skuas** *S. skua* were still hunting along the Norfolk coast, with 13 sightings on 20th. **Mediterranean Gulls** *Larus melanocephalus* continue to be found among roosting flocks across England, with 23 being reported, and an impressive late-November passage of **Little Gulls** *L. minutus* was noted off the Channel Islands, with between 500 and 1,000 counted per day. A lingering **Sabine's Gull** *L. sabini* was at Chew Valley Lake (Avon) on 1st, and the six **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis* reported (plates 80-83) were all in

80. Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Avon, November 1987 (Brian E. Slade)





81 & 82. Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* in throw-back display (left) and flight, Merseyside, November 1987 (A. Pryce)

western and southern coastal areas. A few **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucoides* appeared in the south after the arrival of the cold weather on 21st, with even fewer **Glaucous Gulls** *L. hyperboreus*. A **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* was a good record off Hartlepool (Cleveland) on 24th, and the **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* on Anglesey (Gwynedd) stayed through the month.

#### Larks and swallows

**Shore Larks** *Eremophila alpestris* were scarce, nine at Barmston (Humberside) being the largest flock reported. Four **Swallows** *Hirundo rustica* were still in Cumbria on 10th, but

the commoner species was **Red-rumped Swallow** *H. daurica*. Nine reports came from England, five from Scotland and two from Ireland, the latest being on 25th at Southwold (Suffolk); a remarkable year for this vagrant.

#### Pipits

A further five **Richard's Pipits** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* were reported, one still present in the Isles of Scilly on 25th. A very late **Tawny Pipit** *A. campestris* visited Fair Isle on 10th; one **Olive-backed Pipit** *A. hodgsoni* was still to be found in Orkney on 6th; and a **Water Pipit** *A. spinoletta* was reported from Scilly on 27th.

#### Thrushes

Late passage included a **Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica* in Orkney on 16th, and there was a **Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata* of one of the eastern races *maura/stejnegeri* in Scilly. Much rarer, a **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* appeared briefly at Foreness Point (Kent) on 7th, with a further report of one at Guernsey Airport (Channel Islands) on 8th and 9th. The Nearctic visitors on Lundy (Devon), namely the **Swainson's Thrush** *Catharus ustulatus* and the **Veery** *C. fuscescens*, remained until 8th, and, from Siberia, another **Black-throated Thrush** *Turdus ruficollis* was found, in Shetland on 11th.

83. Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Merseyside, November 1987 (Steve Young)





### Warblers and flycatchers

By 8th, the third **Dartford Warbler** *Sylvia undata* of late autumn had been found at Dungeness (Kent), and another was seen at Felixstowe Ferry (Suffolk) on 29th and 30th. The late-autumn invasion of **Pallas's Warblers** *Phylloscopus proregulus* continued, with the records biased towards southern England. Ten were found on the British east coast, with nine of these in East Anglia, a further nine on the British south and west, and Irish south coasts, one in Shetland, and two inland, at Droitwich (Worcestershire) on 17th and at Market Drayton (Shropshire) on 18th. A further eight **Yellow-browed Warblers** *P. inornatus* were found up to 14th, with seven **Dusky Warblers** *P. fuscatus* in the same period (plate 84). Three **Red-breasted Flycatchers** *Ficedula parva* were belated arrivals on 1st.

### Shrikes

An **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* was identified at Wells (Norfolk) on 1st (plates 85 & 86), where it stayed until 5th. On 7th, the same individual was located at Wembury (Devon), finally being seen on 17th. **Great Grey Shrikes** *L. excubitor* were not commonly reported: some six sightings only, all in England.

### Starlings, finches and buntings

A **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus*, present from 17th October at Christmas Pie (Surrey), fed in a private garden, the owners generously allowing visitors to view the bird (plate 87), which stayed until 24th. Another stayed in Scilly from 5th to 23rd. Those

85 & 86. Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*, Norfolk, November 1987 (Reg J. Mellis)

87. Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus*, Surrey, November 1987 (Reg J. Mellis)

islands also hosted a **Serin** *Serinus serinus* from 1st to 7th. An influx of **Lapland Buntings** *Calcarius lapponicus* occurred at the end of the month, flocks of 50 being reported from Sandwich Bay (Kent) and Aberlady Bay (Lothian). Flocks of 300 **Snow Buntings** *Plectrophenax nivalis* were seen in Orkney and at Lough Foyle (Co. Londonderry), and there were several records of one or two inland. Rare species continued to appear, with further **Pine Buntings** *Emberiza leucocephalos*, in Orkney from 3rd to 9th, and on Fair Isle on 12th; a **Rustic Bunting** *E. rustica* at Upton Warren on 7th; two **Little Buntings** *E. pusilla* on 3rd and 8th in Orkney; and a **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *E. aureola* at the Alt Estuary (Lancashire) on 17th.

84. Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*, Norfolk, November 1987 (Steve Young)





## Monthly marathon

Without Hadoram Shirihihi's paper (*Brit. Birds* 80: 473-482), how many entrants would have named the bird in plate 338 in the December 1987 issue as an Upcher's Warbler *Hippolais languida*? That bird was competitors' most popular choice:

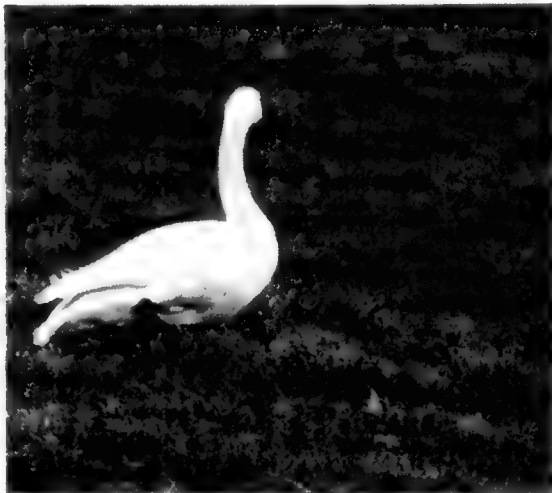
Upcher's Warbler <i>Hippolais languida</i>	(72%)
Olivaceous Warbler <i>H. pallida</i>	(16%)
Marsh Warbler <i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>	(4%)
Olive-tree Warbler <i>H. olivetorum</i>	(2%)
Melodious Warbler <i>H. polyglotta</i>	(1%)

Other species mentioned included Booted Warbler *H. caligata*, Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*, Garden Warbler *S. borin* and Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus*.

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Upcher's Warbler was the correct answer. It was photographed in Israel by Hadoram Shirihai in May 1987. Once again, 'the Portland Prodigy', Graham Walbridge, gave the right answer, and, with a seven-in-a-row sequence, now has just three more to go before he wins the SUNBIRD holiday in Africa, Asia or North America. His closest pursuers—hoping, no doubt, that he fails with one of those three—are the 48 entrants who have so far each achieved three consecutive correct identifications. This month's puzzle picture appears below (plate 88). As usual, discovering the correct identification may be a matter of pure skill or may also involve guesswork and some luck. Have a go!



88. Second 'Monthly marathon' competition. Photograph number 11. Identify the species. Read the rules on page 49 in the January 1988 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th April 1988

## Recent reports

*Compiled by Mark Boyd*

This summary covers the period 18th January to 14th February 1988

**White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* St Ives Bay (Cornwall), from 8th February.

**American Wigeon** *Anas americana* Rostellan (Co. Cork), throughout; Wimbleball Lake (Somerset), throughout; Minsmere (Suffolk), two on 27th-28th January.

**Falcated Duck** *Anas falcata* Thrapston/Ringstead Gravel-pits (Northamptonshire), throughout.

**Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* Timsbury Gravel-pits (Hampshire), throughout; Lough Corbet (Co. Down), throughout.

**Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* Lough Corbet, from 13th February, with several *Aythya* hybrids nearby for comparison.

**Crane** *Grus grus* Ballycotton (Co. Cork), two throughout.

**Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* Seaview

(Isle of Wight), throughout; Plymouth (Devon), from 20th January.

**Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* Penmaenmawr, 11th-13th February.

**Slender-billed Gull** *Larus genei* Bamburgh (Northumberland), reported 14th February.

**Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor* Woodbury Common (Devon), throughout; Snodland (Kent), from 24th January; Turville (Buckinghamshire), from 7th February; Rauceby Common (Lincolnshire), throughout.

**Dipper** *Cinclus cinclus* Nominated, black-bellied race, Sopwell (Hertfordshire), from 23rd.

**Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* Ashby de la Zouch (Leicestershire), from 31st January.

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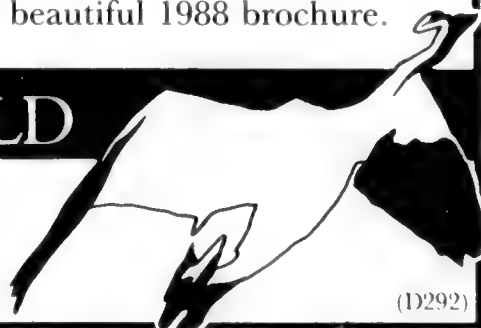
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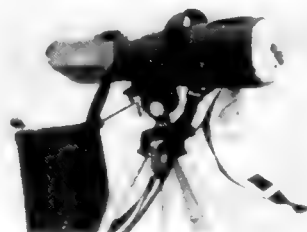
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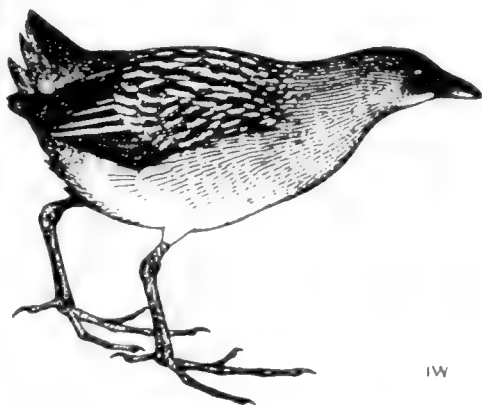
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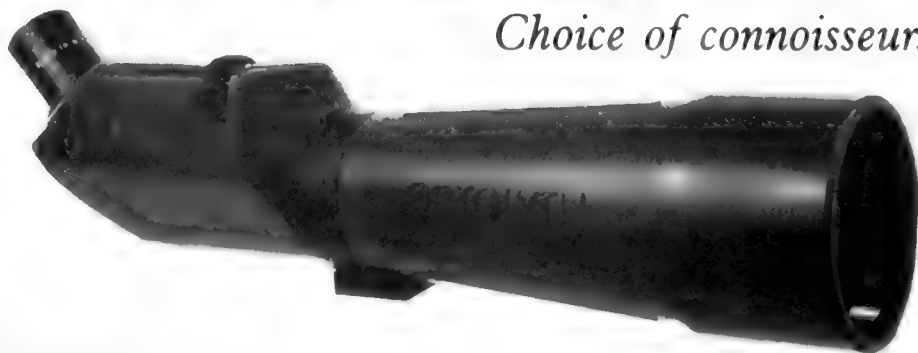
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# British Birds

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# British Birds

**Volume 81   Number 4   April 1988**



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**Identification of Basra Reed Warbler**  
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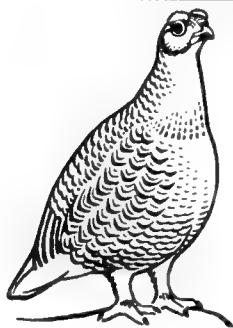
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7 x 42 BA	498 00
10 x 40 BA	517 00
10 x 90 BAN	539 00
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Hard Case	40 00
Rainguard	8 00
Eye Cups (set)	16 00

### NIKON

7 x 20 B	74 95
9 x 25 B	79 95
8 x 23 B	99 95
10 x 25 B	119 95
8 x 20 Roof	134 95
10 x 25 Roof	149 95
7 x 35 Action	99 00
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10 x 50 Action	165 00
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TS-2 Body	133 00
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### OPTICRON

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(D305)





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(D306)

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(D295)



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(D291)

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15 x 60 GAT Porro  
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TSN-3 body (45")  
TSN-4 body

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20 x (WA) eyepiece  
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TS-1 body (45")  
TS-2 body  
TS eyepieces from

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30 x 80  
TB 80 body  
TBS 80 body (45")  
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22 x 60  
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12 x 50 Alpin

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(D252)



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25x 40x 60x	28 00
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Opticron Piccolo 60mm scope	152 00
c w 15-60x zoom E P	

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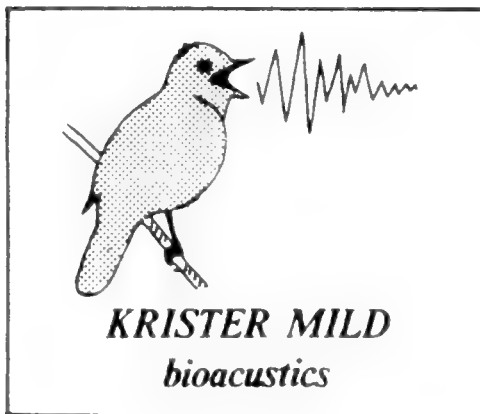
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(D325)

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(D311)



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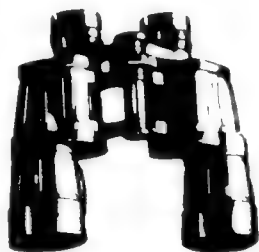
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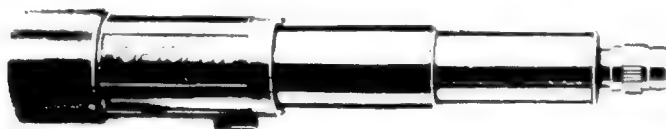


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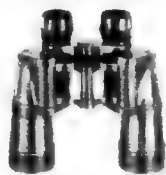


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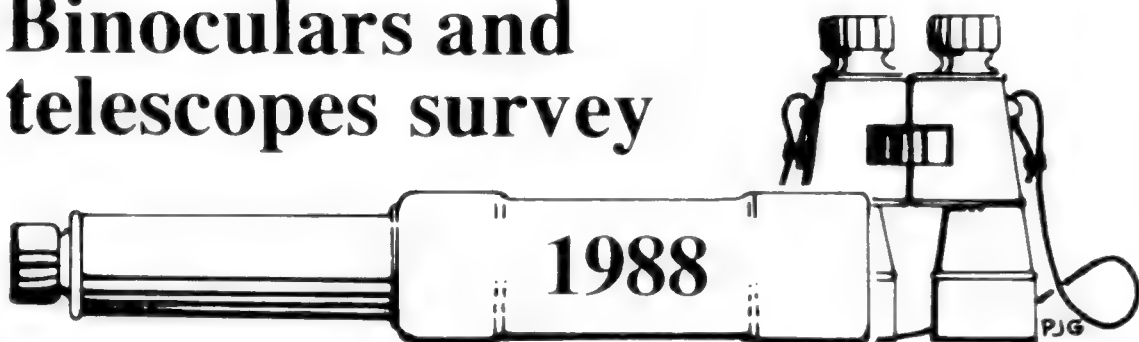
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# British Birds

VOLUME 81 NUMBER 4 APRIL 1988

## Binoculars and telescopes survey



*J. T. R. Sharrock*

**T**his report is the fourth on a survey of the binocular and telescope ownership, and views on these items of equipment, of the readers of the monthly magazine *British Birds*. Previous surveys were published in 1978, 1982 and 1985 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 429-439; 76: 155-161; 78: 167-175). As in the past, a questionnaire was included in an issue of the magazine (October 1987) and readers were invited to detach, complete and return it; on this occasion, a total of 1,259 subscribers did so. We recognise that this is not a random sample, but the readers of *British Birds* are the most experienced users of optical equipment for birdwatching, in a wide variety of weather conditions and habitats, from arid deserts to humid tropical rain-forests, for long periods in mist and rain when watching passing seabirds, or for intense watching of breeding behaviour, or the reading of ring-numbers on marked individuals in flocks of geese. Those who returned completed questionnaires will probably include higher proportions of those who particularly like or particularly dislike the equipment which they are using, who will have had a greater incentive to report on the quality or the failings of their binoculars or telescopes than those birdwatchers who were mainly content with their instruments.

It should be stressed that every binocular and telescope named or listed in this report has been rated at least as 'Good' (or as 'Very good' or 'Excellent'). Even the most lowly rated will be one of the top 30 optical instruments available, and far superior to many of those that can commonly be found for sale in 'High Street stores'. It is important that readers of this report recognise that even those at the bottom of our tables can still be excellent value for money.

## Binoculars

### *Most popular binoculars*

Among *British Birds* subscribers, the most frequently owned binocular is still the *Zeiss West Dialyt* 10 × 40B. Indeed, since our last survey, this has increased in popularity by over 8%, to stand more than 20% clear of its nearest rival (table 1). The *Zeiss Jena Jenoptem* 10 × 50 remains in second place. Four models have shown small but significant increases in the three years since our last survey: *Leitz Trinovid* 10 × 40B (up 2.2%), *Optolyth Alpin* 10 × 50, *Optolyth Alpin* 10 × 40 and *Zeiss West* 7 × 42 (all up 1.1-1.3%).

**Table 1. Most popular binoculars**

The binoculars most frequently owned by knowledgeable birdwatchers in 1987

Position	(1985 position)	Make & model	1985 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(1)	ZEISS WEST Dialyt 10 × 40B	20.7	28.8
2nd	(2)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 10 × 50	13.1	8.7
3rd	(4)	LEITZ Trinovid 10 × 40B	4.8	7.0
4th	(5)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10 × 50	3.5	4.8
5th	(3)	SWIFT Audubon 8.5 × 44	7.0	4.4
6th	(9)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10 × 40	2.6	3.7
7th	(7)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 8 × 30	3.0	3.3
8th	(8)	LEITZ Trinovid 8 × 40B	2.7	2.5
9th	(9)	ZEISS JENA Notarem 10 × 40B	2.6	2.2
10th	(11)	SWAROVSKI/HABICHT Diana 10 × 40	2.3	1.7
11th	(16)	SWIFT Newport 10 × 50	0.8	1.6
12th	(6)	MIRADOR 10 × 40	3.2	1.4
13th =	(12)	ZEISS JENA Dekarem 10 × 50	1.5	1.2
13th =	—	ZEISS WEST 7 × 42	—	1.2
15th	(14)	SWIFT Trilyte 10 × 40B	0.9	0.8
		All others	28.0	27.6

### *Most popular makes of binocular*

Since one manufacturer may produce only one or two models suitable for birdwatching whereas another may make half-a-dozen or more, we have on this occasion listed not only the most popular models (table 1), but also the most popular makes (table 2). *Zeiss West* is well in the lead, with

**Table 2. Most popular makes of binocular**

The makes most frequently owned by knowledgeable birdwatchers in 1987

Position	Make	%
1st	ZEISS WEST	30.8
2nd	ZEISS JENA	16.4
3rd	OPTOLYTH	10.4
4th	LEITZ	10.3
5th	SWIFT	9.5
6th	SWAROVSKI/HABICHT	2.3
7th	OPTICRON	1.7
8th	MIRADOR	1.4
9th	PENTAX	1.0
10th	ROSS	0.9
11th	NIKON	0.8
	All others	14.5

three in every ten experienced birdwatchers owning a Zeiss West binocular. The East German firm, Zeiss Jena, lies second, with Optolyth, Leitz and Swift occupying the third to fifth positions.

Most highly rated binoculars

The questionnaire asked owners to rate their binoculars on a six-category performance scale: as Excellent, Very good, Good, Satisfactory, Poor or Very poor. Although subjective, these assessments, made independently by the 1,259 owners, give a good indication of the quality of the different models, based on thousands of hours of intensive field use (which we believe to be more relevant than any amount of laboratory testing).

Top, with an amazing 100% record, came a newcomer to this table, the Zeiss West 7 × 42, all of whose owners rated it as 'Excellent' (table 3). Second, up one position from 1985, was another Zeiss West model, the Dialyt 10 × 40B. Other models, all rated as 'Excellent' on average, were the Leitz 7 × 42, the Leitz Trinovid 8 × 40B, the Leitz Trinovid 10 × 40B, the Swarovski/Habicht Diana 10 × 40 and the Opticron Elite 9 × 35.

Table 3. Most highly rated binoculars

Performance of binoculars as rated by their owners

Performance rating: 6 = excellent, 5 = very good, 4 = good, 3 = satisfactory, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

(1985)		Performance rating						Average per- formance rating
Position	(position) Make & model	6	5	4	3	2	1	
1st	ZEISS WEST 7 × 42	15						Excellent 6.00
2nd	(3) ZEISS WEST Dialyt 10 × 40B	306	53	1	1			Excellent 5.84
3rd	LEITZ 7 × 42	6		1				Excellent 5.71
4th	(1) LEITZ Trinovid 8 × 40B	23	7	1				Excellent 5.71
5th	(2) LEITZ Trinovid 10 × 40B	70	13	3	1	1		Excellent 5.70
6th	(4) SWAROVSKI HABICHT Diana 10 × 40	13	8	1				Excellent 5.55
7th	OPTICRON Elite 9 × 35	4	4					Excellent 5.50
8th	(5) OPTOLYTH Alpin 10 × 50	28	29	4				Very good 5.39
9th	(8) SWIFT Osprey 7.5 × 42	3	6					Very good 5.33
10th	(13) SWIFT Audubon 8.5 × 44	24	22	8	1			Very good 5.25
11th	(7) OPTOLYTH Alpin 10 × 40	15	27	4				Very good 5.24
12th	(6) OPTOLYTH 8 × 40	1	5					Very good 5.17
13th	NIKON (all models)	3	4	2	1			Very good 4.90
14th	ZEISS JENA Deltrintem 8 × 30	3	2	2	1			Very good 4.88
15th	(9) ZEISS JENA Dekarem 10 × 50	3	8	3	1			Very good 4.87
16th =	(17) PENTAX 8 × 40		3	1				Very good 4.75
16th	(16) SWIFT Newport 10 × 50	4	8	7	1			Very good 4.75
18th	(12) ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 10 × 50	14	55	33	6			Very good 4.71
19th	(18) SWIFT Trilite 10 × 40B	1	5	4				Very good 4.70
20th	(15) MIRADOR 10 × 40	1	10	5	1			Very good 4.65
21st	(11) ROSS Stepruva 9 × 35		3	2				Very good 4.60
22nd	(14) ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 8 × 30	5	20	12	5			Very good 4.60
23rd	OPTICRON Classic 10 × 42	1	3	1		1		Very good 4.50
23rd =	PENTAX 10 × 50		4	1	1			Very good 4.50
25th	(10) ZEISS JENA Notarem 10 × 40B	2	15	6	4	1		Good 4.46
26th	OPTICRON Polarex 10 × 50	1	2	2	2			Good 4.29

Regular readers of these survey reports may wonder how the same model can be more (or less) highly rated in one survey compared with another. In some cases, the model may have been changed slightly by the manufacturer (not, unfortunately, always for the better). In others, longer usage may have revealed previously undetected faults. Thirdly, bird-watchers' requirements change. For instance, 35.1% of respondents to this survey wear spectacles (comparable with the 33.1%-35.9% in our previous surveys), but more now put their binoculars up to the spectacles (63%,

compared with the previous 57%-59%) rather than lifting or removing their spectacles first (37%, compared with the previous 41%-43%). Thus, more birdwatchers will be demanding a wide field of view, flexible eyepiece rims and optics designed for spectacle wearers. For them, a binocular identical to one which they previously regarded as 'Excellent' or 'Very good' could now be rated as 'Poor' or even 'Very poor'. Fourthly, there is no doubt that the views of one birdwatcher influence another, and there are 'fashions' created partly by advertising, but also by word-of-mouth recommendations. If someone has not got 'this year's model', he or she may be less content with the binocular which he or she does own, in the belief (justified or unjustified) that it is not as good as it could be.

In addition, there are, of course, improvements and new models constantly becoming available. It is especially noticeable that three models appearing in our table for the first time, and all rated as 'Excellent'—*Zeiss West* 7 × 42, *Leitz* 7 × 42 and *Opticron* Elite 9 × 35—have a lower magnification than the formerly fashionable 10 ×. This almost certainly reflects the still increasing habitual use of the telescope-and-tripod combination (see later), so that most experienced birdwatchers do not need such powerful binoculars and put even greater stress than before on a large field of view.

#### *The most satisfactory binoculars*

Three binoculars stand head-and-shoulders above all others when owners are asked whether they would buy the same again or change to another

**Table 4. The most satisfactory binoculars**

Proportion of current owners who would buy the same binoculars again				
Position	(1985 position)	Make & model	No.	(%)
1st	—	ZEISS WEST 7 × 42	14/15	93.3
2nd	(1)	ZEISS WEST Dyalit 10 × 40B	311/362	85.9
3rd	(2)	LEITZ Trinovid 10 × 40B	71/88	80.7
4th	—	LEITZ 7 × 42	4/7	57.1
5th	—	OPTICRON Elite 9 × 35	4/8	50.0
6th	(3)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10 × 50	29/61	47.5
7th	(6)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10 × 40	21/47	44.7
8th	(4)	LEITZ Trinovid 8 × 40B	13/31	41.9
9th	(13)	SWIFT Audubon 8.5 × 44	21/55	38.2
10th	—	ZEISS JENA Deltrintem 8 × 30	3/8	37.5
11th	(5)	SWAROVSKI/HABICHT Diana 10 × 40	8/22	36.4
12th	(8)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 8 × 40	2/6	33.3
13th	(9)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 10 × 50	33/109	30.3
14th	(17)	SWIFT Trilyte 10 × 40B	3/10	30.0
15th	(11)	ZEISS JENA Dekarem 10 × 50	3/15	20.0
16th	(7)	ZEISS JENA Notarem 10 × 40B	5/28	17.9
17th =	—	OPTICRON Classic 10 × 42	1/6	16.7
17th =	—	PENTAX 10 × 50	1/6	16.7
17th =	(10)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 8 × 30	7/42	16.7
20th	—	OPTICRON Polarex 10 × 50	1/7	14.3
21st	(14)	MIRADOR 10 × 40	1/17	5.9
22nd	(15)	SWIFT Newport 10 × 50	1/20	5.0
		All others	25/289	8.7

model. The highly rated *Zeiss West* 7 × 42 tops the table (table 4), followed by its stablemate, the *Zeiss West* Dialyt 10 × 40B, and the latter's equivalent *Leitz* model, the *Trinovid* 10 × 40B. Again, the high positions in the table of relatively low-magnification models is noticeable.

Top binoculars for the future

By combining the totals of birdwatchers who intend to buy the same model again (table 4) with those who plan to switch to each model, we can predict current purchasing intentions over the next few years (although these will obviously be amended as new models appear or advertising influences purchasers' decisions).

Top model last time, and still dominantly at the head of the table, is the *Zeiss West* Dialyt 10 × 40B (table 5). Our figures suggest that over one-third of the binoculars sold to experienced birdwatchers in the next few years will be this model. Its great rival, the *Leitz Trinovid* 10 × 40B, remains in second place. As an aside, it is interesting to note that 5% of *Zeiss West* 10 × 40 owners plan to switch to *Leitz* 10 × 40 next time, compared with 7% of *Leitz* 10 × 40 owners who intend to change to a *Zeiss West* 10 × 40.

Table 5. Top binoculars for the future

The make and model which experienced birdwatchers intend to purchase next time that they buy a pair of binoculars

Position	(1985 position)	Make & model	1985 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(1)	ZEISS WEST Dialyt 10 × 40B	40.9	36.8
2nd	(2)	LEITZ Trinovid 10 × 40B	11.8	11.4
3rd	—	ZEISS WEST 7 × 42	—	4.1
4th	(4)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10 × 50	7.1	3.9
5th	(5)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10 × 40	3.6	3.2
6th	(3)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 10 × 50	8.5	2.6
7th	(6)	SWIFT Audubon 8.5 × 44	3.1	2.1
8th	(7)	LEITZ Trinovid 8 × 40B	3.0	1.0
9th	(9)	ZEISS JENA Notarem 10 × 40B	2.3	0.9
10th	(8)	SWAROVSKI/HABICHT Diana 10 × 40	2.5	0.8
11th	(10)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 8 × 30	1.3	0.6
12th	—	LEITZ 7 × 42	—	0.4
13th =	(11)	MIRADOR 10 × 40	1.2	0.3
13th =	—	OPTICRON Elite 9 × 35	—	0.3
15th =	(15)	SWIFT Trilyte 10 × 40B	0.3	0.2
15th =	(13)	ZEISS JENA Dekarem 10 × 50	0.5	0.2
15th =	—	ZEISS JENA Deltrintem 8 × 30	—	0.2
18th	(12)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 8 × 40	1.0	0.2
		Others or don't know		30.8

The most striking new entries are the *Zeiss West* 7 × 42, which has leapt into third place, and the *Leitz* 7 × 42, which is twelfth. We predict, however, that actual sales of these two binoculars will exceed the figures indicated here, for word-of-mouth praise of the attributes of a 7 × 42 compared with the still-fashionable 10 × 40 is, in our view, likely to result in both the *Zeiss West* 7 × 42 and the *Leitz* 7 × 42 becoming very popular purchases in the late 1980s. The *Opticron* Elite 9 × 35 and *Zeiss Jena* Deltrintem 8 × 30 may also be significant new entries, for none of the



other 12 models listed has a larger potential share of the market now, compared with that predicted for future sales in our 1985 survey report.

*Top makes of binocular for the future*

The pre-eminent position of *Zeiss West* is confirmed (table 6), for the increasing popularity of the *Zeiss West* 7 × 42 exactly matches the slight drop in favour of the top birdwatching model, the *Zeiss West* Dialyt 10 × 40B (table 5). *Leitz*, *Optolyth* and *Zeiss Jena* are the next most favourite planned purchases, but comparison of table 2 and table 6 indicates clearly that popularity encourages popularity: provided that it is highly regarded, most people not only want but also plan to buy the best that is available, and change to a good model is likely to follow the well-known snowball principle. By the early 1990s, we expect that well over half of the most knowledgeable birdwatchers will own either a *Zeiss West* or a *Leitz* binocular. Luckily, there are another half-dozen excellent makes which provide cheaper alternatives for those who are less-well-heeled or who do not wish to make such a major investment in one item of equipment: *Optolyth*, *Zeiss Jena*, *Swift*, *Swarovski/Habicht*, *Opticron* and *Mirador* can all be recommended.

**Table 6. Top makes of binocular for the future**

The makes which experienced birdwatchers intend to purchase next time that they buy a pair of binoculars

Position	Make	%
1st	ZEISS WEST	41.3
2nd	LEITZ	12.8
3rd	OPTOLYTH	7.2
4th	ZEISS JENA	4.5
5th	SWIFT	2.4
6th	SWAROVSKI/HABICHT	0.9
7th	OPTICRON	0.5
8th	MIRADOR	0.3
	Others or don't know	30.1

**Telescopes**

The proportion of *British Birds*-level birdwatchers owning and using a telescope has now increased to over 91% (from 64% in 1978, 81% in 1982 and 86% in 1985). The proportion who use one 'Always' or 'Regularly' when birdwatching has also continued to increase, having now reached 86% (from 41% in 1978, 76% in 1982 and 80% in 1985). The constant use of a tripod has also continued to gain adherents, with 70% now always using a telescope-on-tripod combination (compared with 22% in 1978, 50% in 1982 and 55% in 1985), and only 7% now never or only occasionally using a tripod (the figure was as high as 43% only ten years ago, in 1978). Nowadays, only 11% of experienced birdwatchers do not own and use a telescope-with-tripod combination as well as binoculars.

*Most popular telescopes*

The most frequently owned telescope is now the *Bushnell* Spacemaster × 60, which has risen three places since 1985 to become the most popular

**Table 7. Most popular telescopes**

The telescopes most frequently owned by knowledgeable birdwatchers in 1987  
wce = with changeable eyepieces

Position	(1985 position)	Make & model	1985 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(4)	BUSHNELL Spacemaster $\times 60$ wce	12.6	14.9
2nd	(1)	OPTOLYTH $30 \times 75$ GA	19.9	13.1
3rd	—	KOWA TSN-1/TSN-2 $\times 77$ wce	—	11.0
4th	(2)	KOWA TS-1/TS-2 $\times 60$ wce	13.2	6.9
5th =	(3)	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB Discoverer 15-60 $\times 60$	12.8	5.7
5th =	(10)	OPTOLYTH $30 \times 80$ GA	1.2	5.7
7th	(5)	HERTEL & REUSS Televari 25-60 $\times 60$	12.5	5.1
8th	(9)	MIRADOR $\times 60$ wce	2.4	3.3
9th	—	NIKON Fieldscope 20 $\times 60$ Ed	—	3.0
10th	(6)	NICKEL Supra 15-60 $\times 60$	7.2	2.8
11th	(16)	OPTICRON Piccolo $\times 60$ wce	0.5	1.7
12th	(8)	SWIFT Telemaster 15-60 $\times 60$	2.8	1.6
13th	(12)	OPTICRON High resolution $\times 60$ wce	0.9	1.5
14th	(13)	OPTIMA $\times 60$ wce	0.7	1.4
15th =	—	OPTICRON 20-60 $\times 60$	—	1.3
15th =	(7)	SCHMIDT & BENDER 15-60 $\times 60$	3.0	1.3
17th	(11)	OPTOLYTH 22 $\times 60$ GA	1.1	0.9
		All others		18.8

model (table 7). Close behind are the *Optolyth*  $30 \times 75$ GA and a new entry, the *Kowa* TSN-1/TSN-2, which has leapt from nowhere to achieve third place and a sizeable 11% of the market. Other models which have gained in popularity are the *Optolyth*  $30 \times 80$ GA, the *Mirador*  $\times 60$ , the *Nikon* Fieldscope 20  $\times 60$  Ed, the *Opticron* Piccolo  $\times 60$ , the *Opticron* HR  $\times 60$ , the *Optima*  $\times 60$  and the *Opticron* 20-60  $\times 60$ .

#### *Most popular makes of telescope*

Each with more than one popular model, three makes—*Kowa*, *Optolyth* and

**Table 8. Most popular makes of telescope**

The makes most frequently owned by knowledgeable birdwatchers in 1987

Position	Make	%
1st	KOWA	24.0
2nd	OPTOLYTH	21.3
3rd	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB	20.6
4th	OPTICRON	7.8
5th	HERTEL & REUSS	5.1
6th	MIRADOR	3.3
7th	NIKON	3.0
8th	NICKEL	2.8
9th	SWIFT	1.6
10th	OPTIMA	1.4
11th	SCHMIDT & BENDER	1.3
12th	CHARLES FRANK	1.0
13th	SWAROVSKI/HABICHT	0.7
14th	GREENKAT	0.5
15th	TAMRON	0.4
16th	QUESTAR	0.3
	Others	4.9

*Bushnell/Bausch & Lomb*—account together for almost two-thirds of the telescopes owned by *British Birds* subscribers (table 8). *Kowa*, the top make, is now owned by almost one-quarter of all knowledgeable birdwatchers.

*Most highly rated telescopes*

The crystal-clear image produced by the *Questar* mirrorlens telescope, even at the highest magnifications, is legendary. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that it has again achieved a 100% record, with all of its few owners rating it as 'Excellent' (table 9). Straight in at second place is a new entry in our tables, the *Nikon* Fieldscope 20 × 60 Ed. With the same score as in our last survey, the *Swarovski/Habicht* 30 × 75 is again very highly rated by its owners. The *Kowa* TSN-1/TSN-2 × 77 and the *Optolyth* 30 × 80GA are both rated as 'Excellent'. We must again stress here, however, that all 25 models listed in this table were rated as 'Good', 'Very good' or 'Excellent': these are, therefore, the top 25 models for birdwatching, selected from among the many which are on sale.

Table 9. Most highly rated telescopes

Performance of telescopes as rated by their owners

Performance: 6 = excellent, 5 = very good, 4 = good, 3 = satisfactory, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

1985		Performance rating						Average per- formance rating
Position	position)	Make & model	6	5	4	3	2	
1st	(1)	QUESTAR (mirrorlens) wce	3					Excellent 6.00
2nd		NIKON Fieldscope 20 × 60 Ed	29	3	1			Excellent 5.85
3rd	(2)	SWAROVSKI/HABICHT 30 × 75	6	2				Excellent 5.75
4th		KOWA TSN-1/TSN-2 × 77 wce	86	36	5			Excellent 5.64
5th	(4)	OPTOLYTH 30 × 80GA	40	21	4		1	Excellent 5.50
6th	(3)	OPTOLYTH 30 × 75GA	80	64	6	1		Very good 5.48
7th =	(12)	OPTOLYTH 22 × 60GA	4	6				Very good 5.40
7th =		TAMRON 20-60 × 65	2	3				Very good 5.40
9th	(6)	KOWA TS-1/TS-2 × 60 wce	28	39	12			Very good 5.20
10th	(5)	BUSHNELL Spacemaster × 60 wce	54	91	24	1	1	Very good 5.15
11th		OPTICRON 20-60 × 60	5	7	3			Very good 5.13
12th	(9)	OPTICRON High resolution × 60 wce	6	7	4			Very good 5.12
13th =		OPTICRON Classic	1	3	1			Very good 5.00
13th =	(10)	OPTOLYTH 22-60 × 70GA	1	2	1			Very good 5.00
15th	(8)	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB Discoverer 15-60 × 60	14	36	10	6		Very good 4.88
16th	(11)	MIRADOR × 60 wce	7	15	12	3		Very good 4.70
17th		OPTICRON Polarex		5		1		Very good 4.67
18th	(13)	OPTIMA × 60 wce	1	8	4	2		Very good 4.53
19th	(15)	SWIFT Telemaster 15-60 × 60	3	7	3	4		Very good 4.53
20th	(7)	OPTICRON Piccolo × 60 wce	3	6	8	3		Good 4.45
21st		CHARLES FRANK (all models)	1	3	6	1	1	Good 4.17
22nd	(14)	HERTEL & REUSS Televari 25-60 × 60	1	21	19	16	1	Good 4.09
23rd	(17)	SCHMIDT & BENDER 15-60 × 60		4	5	5	1	Good 3.80
24th	(18)	NICKEL Supra 15-60 × 60		5	11	13	3	Good 3.56
25th	(16)	GREENKAT × 60		2		3	1	Good 3.50

*The most satisfactory telescopes*

When a new telescope takes 11% of the market (table 7), beats other very well-known models in its performance rating (table 9) and then gets voted 'the most satisfactory telescope' (table 10), everyone planning to buy a telescope needs to take notice. The *Nikon* Fieldscope 20 × 60 Ed is clearly a most remarkable instrument.

The relatively few owners of *Questar* mirrorlens and *Tamron* 20-60 × 65

Table 10. The most satisfactory telescopes  
Proportion of current owners who would buy the same telescope again

Position	(1985 position)	Make & model	No.	%
1st	—	NIKON Fieldscope 20 × 60 Ed	24/34	70.6
2nd	(2)	QUESTAR (mirrorlens) wce	2/3	66.7
3rd	—	TAMRON 20-60 × 65	3/5	60.0
4th	(4)	OPTOLYTH 30 × 80GA	34/66	51.5
5th	—	KOWA TSN-1/TSN-2 × 77 wce	55/127	43.3
6th	(8)	OPTICRON High resolution × 60 wce	7/17	41.2
7th	—	OPTICRON Classic	2/5	40.0
8th	(9)	SWAROVSKI/HABICHT 30 × 75	3/8	37.5
9th	(1)	BUSHNELL Spacemaster × 60 wce	64/171	37.4
10th	(12)	OPTOLYTH 22 × 60GA	3/10	30.0
11th	—	OPTICRON 20-60 × 60	4/15	26.7
12th	(6)	OPTOLYTH 30 × 75GA	40/151	26.5
13th	(7)	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB Discoverer 15-60 × 60	16/66	24.2
14th	(5)	OPTICRON Piccolo × 60 wce	4/20	20.0
15th	(3)	KOWA TS-1/TS-2 × 60 wce	14/79	17.7
16th	—	OPTIMA × 60 wce	2/16	12.5
17th	—	SWIFT TELEMMASTER 15-60 × 60	2/18	11.1
18th	—	CHARLES FRANK (all models)	1/12	8.3
19th	—	SCHMIDT & BENDER 15-60 × 60	1/15	6.7
20th	(9)	MIRADOR × 60 wce	2/38	5.3
21st	—	HERTEL & REUSS Televari 25-60 × 60	3/59	5.1
		All others	66/215	30.7

telescopes are also very satisfied. The *Optolyth* 30 × 80GA and the *Kowa* TSN-1/TSN-2 × 77 are regarded as the most satisfactory of the telescopes which are popular with experienced birdwatchers.

Top telescopes for the future

Most birdwatchers plan to acquire an *Optolyth* 30 × 80GA, a *Kowa* TSN-1/TSN-2 × 77, an *Optolyth* 30 × 75GA, a *Nikon* Fieldscope 20 × 60 Ed or a *Bushnell* Spacemaster × 60 the next time that they buy a telescope (table 11). As we predicted (*Brit. Birds* 78: 175), the *Optolyth* 30 × 80GA has risen to top this table, ousting its stablemate, the *Optolyth* 30 × 75GA, which was first in our last survey. The *Kowa* TSN-1/TSN-2 × 77 is close behind, and another new entry, the *Nikon* Fieldscope 20 × 60 Ed, is, in our opinion, likely to do even better than is suggested by its fourth place and 6.9% share.

Top makes of telescope for the future

Our survey shows that two makes of telescope—*Kowa* and *Optolyth*—are together likely to take the lion's share of purchases by birdwatchers in the next few years (table 12). *Kowa* is at present the top make, which over one-third of experienced birdwatchers plan to purchase next time that they buy a telescope. As we have already stated, however, we predict that *Nikon*, with its Fieldscope, will take more than the 6.9% shown in table 12.

**Table 11. Top telescopes for the future**

The make and model which experienced birdwatchers intend to purchase next time that they buy a telescope

Position	(1985 position)	Make & model	1985 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(5)	OPTOLYTH 30 × 80GA	11.7	18.3
2nd		KOWA TSN-1/TSN-2 × 77 wce	—	14.5
3rd	(1)	OPTOLYTH 30 × 75GA	26.8	9.1
4th	—	NIKON Fieldscope 20 × 60 Ed	—	6.9
5th	(2)	BUSHNELL Spacemaster × 60 wce	16.5	6.7
6th	(3)	KOWA TS-1/TS-2 × 60 wce	15.8	2.2
7th	(4)	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB Discoverer 15-60 × 60	13.1	1.4
8th	(11)	QUESTAR (mirrorlens) wce	0.9	1.3
9th =	(13)	OPTICRON Piccolo × 60 wce	0.4	0.7
9th =	(13)	OPTOLYTH 22 × 60GA	0.4	0.7
11th	(10)	OPTICRON High resolution × 60 wce	1.1	0.6
12th	—	OPTICRON 20-60 × 60	—	0.3
13th	(6)	HERTEL & REUSS Televari 25-60 × 60	3.1	0.3
13th =	(17)	OPTIMA × 60 wce	0.1	0.3
13th =	(7)	SWAROVSKI/HABICHT 30 × 75	2.1	0.3
13th =		TAMRON 20-60 × 65		0.3
17th =	(9)	MIRADOR × 60 wce	1.0	0.2
17th =	—	OPTICRON Classic		0.2
17th =	(12)	SWIFT Telemaster 15-60 × 60	0.6	0.2
		Others or don't know		35.5

**Table 12. Top makes of telescope for the future**

The make which experienced birdwatchers intend to purchase next time that they buy a telescope

Position	Make	%
1st	KOWA	34.9
2nd	OPTOLYTH	28.6
3rd	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB	8.1
4th	NIKON	6.9
5th	OPTICRON	2.3
6th	QUESTAR	1.3
7th =	HERTEL & REUSS	0.3
7th =	OPTIMA	0.3
7th =	SWAROVSKI/HABICHT	0.3
7th =	TAMRON	0.3
11th =	MIRADOR	0.2
11th =	SWIFT	0.2
13th =	CHARLES FRANK	0.1
13th =	SCHMIDT & BENDER	0.1
	Others or don't know	16.1

### Counting the cost

Our survey results (tables 1-12) have shown what *British Birds* subscribers think of their optical equipment and have indicated their purchasing intentions. These provide good guidelines for other birdwatchers, but, as well as quality, most binocular and telescope purchasers have to consider cost. However much they may desire to own them, not everyone can afford to buy a *Zeiss West* binocular or a *Questar* telescope.

**Table 13. Prices of binoculars and telescopes and summary of league positions**

Not all retailers stock every model, and prices vary from one to another; the prices of telescopes are particularly variable, and depend on whether the lens required is fixed magnification or variable (zoom); in general, the price quoted is the average of the choices available.

Make & model	Approx. retail price in December 1987 (incl. VAT)	Currently most popular (tables 1 & 7)	Most highly rated (tables 3 & 9)	The most satis- factory (tables 4 & 10)	Top models for the future (tables 5 & 11)
<b>Binoculars</b>					
LEITZ Trinovid 10 × 40B	£500	3	5	3	2
ZEISS WEST Dialyt 10 × 40B	£480	1	2	2	1
LEITZ 7 × 42	£470	—	3	4	12
LEITZ Trinovid 8 × 40B	£468	8	4	8	8
ZEISS WEST 7 × 42	£460	13=	1	1	3
SWAROVSKI/HABICHT Diana 10 × 40	£300	10	6	11	10
OPTOLYTH Alpin 10 × 50	£205	4	8	6	4
OPTICRON Elite 9 × 35	£186	—	7	5	13=
OPTOLYTH Alpin 10 × 40	£185	6	11	7	5
ZEISS JENA Notarem 10 × 40B	£180	9	25	16	9
OPTOLYTH 8 × 40	£180	—	12	12	18
SWIFT Audubon 8.5 × 44	£175	5	10	9	7
SWIFT Trilyte 10 × 40B	£158	15	19	14	15=
SWIFT Osprey 7.5 × 42	£145	—	9	—	—
OPTICRON Classic 10 × 42	£114	—	23=	17=	—
ZEISS JENA Dekarem 10 × 50	£90	13=	15	15	15=
PENTAX 10 × 50	£80	—	23=	17=	—
ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 10 × 50	£70	2	18	13	6
PENTAX 8 × 40	£70	—	16=	—	—
OPTICRON Polarex 10 × 50	£56	—	26	20	—
ZEISS JENA Deltrintem 8 × 30	£55	—	14	10	15=
ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 8 × 30	£45	7	22	17=	11
<b>Telescopes</b>					
QUESTAR (mirrorlens) wce	£1,500	—	1	2	8
NIKON Fieldscope 20 × 60 Ed	£489	9	2	1	4
SWAROVSKI/HABICHT 30 × 75	£390	—	3	8	13=
OPTOLYTH 30 × 80GA	£322	5	5	4	1
TAMRON 20-60 × 65	£320	—	7=	3	13=
KOWA TSN-1/TSN-2 × 77 wce	£300	3	4	5	2
OPTOLYTH 22-60 × 70GA	£297	—	13=	—	—
OPTOLYTH 30 × 75GA	£290	2	6	12	3
SWIFT Telemaster 15-60 × 60	£210	12	19	17	17=
BUSHNELL Spacemaster × 60 wce	£200	1	10	9	5
BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB Discoverer 15-60 × 60	£200	5=	15	13	7
OPTOLYTH 22 × 60GA	£195	17	7=	10	9=
OPTICRON High resolution × 60 wce	£185	13	12	6	11
OPTIMA × 60 wce	£180	14	18	16	13=
KOWA TS-1/TS-2 × 60 wce	£180	4	9	15	6
OPTICRON 20-60 × 60	£180	15=	11	11	12
MIRADOR × 60 wce	£180	8	16	20	17=
HERTEL & REUSS Televari 25-60 × 60	£160	7	22	21	13=
SCHMIDT & BENDER 15-60 × 60	£150	15=	23	19	—
OPTICRON Piccolo × 60 wce	£130	11	20	14	9=
OPTICRON Polarex	£120	—	17	—	—
OPTICRON Classic	£100	—	13=	7	17=
GREENKAT × 60	£70	—	25	—	—

To help readers to choose their next purchases, we have summarised the 'league positions' from tables 1-12 and also give price indications (table 13). Careful perusal of this summary table should help binocular and telescope purchasers to pick the best make and model which lies within the price range which they can afford.

Among binoculars, the *Zeiss West* 10 × 40B, the *Zeiss West* 7 × 42, the *Optolyth Alpin* 10 × 50, the *Opticron Elite* 9 × 35, the *Swift Audubon* 8.5 × 44, the *Zeiss Jena Jenoptem* 10 × 50 and the *Zeiss Jena Deltrintem* 8 × 30 seem especially good buys within their respective price ranges. Similarly, among telescopes, the *Questar*, the *Nikon Fieldscope* 20 × 60 Ed, the *Optolyth* 30 × 80GA, the *Kowa KSN-1/TSN-2* × 77, the *Optolyth* 30 × 75GA, the *Bushnell Spacemaster* × 60, the *Kowa TS-1/TS-2* × 60, and the *Opticron Classic* appear to provide high quality and value for money.

Hundreds of binoculars and dozens of telescopes are not included in our sample or in tables 1-13. Most of these are inferior to those listed in this report, but some—especially the newest models—may be excellent. Indeed, we know of several models recently introduced by well-known manufacturers which, because they are so new, are not yet owned in sufficient numbers to feature in our survey results. We always welcome submission by manufacturers or wholesalers of such newly introduced optical products for assessment and possible inclusion in our feature 'Product reports'.

Finally, we must give one vital piece of advice. It is always wise to try (preferably in the field) as many different models as possible before making a final choice, for what suits one person may well not suit another.

### Acknowledgments

We wish especially to thank the 1,259 *British Birds* readers who completed our survey questionnaires. We are also very grateful to the retailing company *In Focus* (204 High Street, Barnet, Hertfordshire EN5 5SZ; telephone 01-449 1445), which assisted us by supplying and checking the prices given in table 13. The survey questionnaires were sorted and analysed for *British Birds* by Jean Richards.

Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

## Seventy-five years ago...

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BLYTH'S REED-WARBLER (*Acrocephalus dumetorum*). At Fair Isle four or five occurred on September 24th, 26th, 29th and 30th, and October 1st. This is very interesting especially in view of the fact that one has already been recorded in our pages at Holy Island, September 25th and another in Holderness, Yorkshire, on September 20th (*supra*, pp. 206 and 217). Yet previous to the autumn of 1912 the bird was only known to have occurred once in the British Isles, viz. at Fair Isle on September 29th, 1910, (*Brit. Birds* 6: 351, April 1913)

# Mystery photographs

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**130** A quick glance at the distinctive bill-shape and long, pointed wings of last month's mystery bird (plate 73, repeated here as plate 89) is sufficient to identify it as a shearwater. The astute reader, confident in our sense of fair play, would have immediately (and correctly) cast aside all thought of those shearwaters not recorded in the North Atlantic Ocean. Pale-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes*, the only shearwater seen in the Western Palearctic but not in the North Atlantic Ocean, is, in addition and in common with Sooty Shearwater *P. griseus*, immediately eliminated by the mystery bird's white underparts.

When a bird is alone and against the sky, as is the case here, size assessment is very difficult, and may be attempted only by judging the bird's proportions. Nevertheless, the two large shearwaters of the North Atlantic can also be ruled out on other characters: Cory's Shearwater *Calonectric diomedea* by our bird's proportionally slim bill and narrow wings, its dark bill and its clean-cut and contrasting facial pattern, and Great Shearwater *P. gravis* by the mystery shearwater's lack of prominent dark shoulder marks and a white collar, of a dark belly patch, and of dark markings on the axillaries and broken dark lines along the underwing-coverts.

The technique of elimination is all very well up to a point, but should be avoided whenever possible in the final identification process. On a positive note, then, which species of shearwater found in the North Atlantic is small or fairly small with a slender, dark bill, a dark crown, nape and rear neck, entirely white underparts, dark-bordered white underwings and pale feet? The answer is, unfortunately, three species: Manx Shearwater *P. puffinus*, Little Shearwater *P. assimilis* and Audubon's Shearwater *P. lherminieri*. Progress can still be made at this stage, however, as our bird's black-and-white, clean-cut appearance with gleaming white flanks and undertail-coverts and white underwings with a contrasting, dark border is quite wrong for the two Mediterranean forms of Manx Shearwater, *P. p. mauretanicus* and *P. p. yelkouan*. A paper on the identification and taxonomic status of these two forms is currently in preparation for *British Birds*.





Flight action, so important in the separation of the three species in contention, as stressed by W. F. Curtis, P. A. Lassey and D. I. M. Wallace (*Brit. Birds* 78: 123-138), is, like size, not possible to perceive from a single photograph. Structural assessment is possible, though, providing the reader is fully conversant with Manx Shearwater, which, being overwhelmingly the commonest of the three in most of the Western Palearctic, is the starting-point, the yardstick against which the two rarer species should be compared. Such familiarity will probably produce the reaction that, structurally, the mystery bird seems to be a typical Manx Shearwater. A Little Shearwater's bill is shorter, finer and rather weaker-looking than that of our bird, its head is more rounded and its wings are proportionately shorter, especially the outer wing, and more rounded at the tips, the whole producing a more compact appearance than that of the commoner species. An Audubon's Shearwater's bill is only slightly shorter, but relatively sturdier, than the mystery bird's, its wings are proportionately a little shorter, and its tail is obviously longer, giving a less well-balanced, more noticeably elongated rear-bodied look.

Can the impression that the bird is a Manx Shearwater be confirmed by a study of its plumage? This is where such a good photograph comes into its own, giving the opportunity to examine closely and at length many characters often imperfectly seen on a shearwater rushing past on a rough day. There are three key areas: the 'face', with the dark of the head extending well below the eye and ending in an apparent bulge caused by an intrusion of white upwards to behind the ear-coverts, and a slightly dirty appearance to the lower 'face' and sides of the throat; the undertail-coverts, which are white; and the underwing, with its very slender, dark leading edge, somewhat broader, dark trailing edge and extensive, dark tip.

There are two races of Little Shearwater in the North Atlantic Ocean to consider: *P. a. baroli* of the Azores, Madeira and the Canary Islands, and *P. a. boydi* of the Cape Verde Islands, the latter being thought by some to be a race of Audubon's Shearwater rather than of Little Shearwater. The face of *P. a. baroli* is predominantly white, with the generally sharply defined border between black and white passing in an almost straight line (or down-curved behind the eye, rather than upcurved as on Manx) above the consequently isolated and easily visible eye. The lower face and throat are white, and the white on the head can have a distinctive disc-like appearance. Like Manx Shearwater, the undertail-coverts are white, and the largely white underwing has a similar dark-bordered pattern, but there is a difference at the wing-tip, where *P. a. baroli* has a much neater, slimmer dark surround owing to white bases to the under primaries. The dark on the head of *P. a. boydi* extends down to about eye-level, but breaks up around the eye itself, where dusky and white are intermixed leaving the eye semi-isolated adjacent to the dark cap, and giving a less clean-cut outline to the face pattern than on *P. a. baroli*. The lower face and throat of *P. a. boydi* are white, and the undertail-coverts are decidedly dusky, unlike



90. Mystery photograph 131. Identify the species. Answer next month

those of the mystery shearwater. The underwing has a pattern similar to, but not as cleanly contrasting as, that of Manx Shearwater, and with the dark wing-tip surround more slender, approaching the even more restricted dark line of *P. a. baroli*.

Audubon's Shearwater has the dark of the head extending below eye-level, but it ends in a straight line with no upwards white intrusion to the rear of the ear-coverts, and the lower face and sides of the throat are white. The undertail-coverts are dark, square-cut against the otherwise white underparts, and give a solidly dark-ended appearance from below. The underwing has a slightly wider dark trailing edge than that of our bird, and a less clean-cut and often dirtier-looking central panel.

By means of a critical examination of structure and plumage made possible by the splendid photograph, which was taken by Keith Atkin in Lincolnshire in September 1983, last month's mystery bird is satisfactorily identified as a Manx Shearwater.

P. G. LANSDOWN

## First meeting of County Bird Recorders

*A report on the meeting by its Chairman, Malcolm Ogilvie*

**P**rior to the Joint *British Birds*/British Trust for Ornithology Conference held at Swanwick, Derbyshire, over the weekend of 10th-12th April 1987, every county and regional ornithological society in Britain was invited to send its Recorder, or a nominated deputy, to attend a meeting of County Bird Recorders to be held at the Conference on the afternoon of Saturday 11th April. In addition, representatives of the RSPB, the BTO,

the BOU, the NCC, the Irish Rare Birds Committee, the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, the BBRC, and, of course, *British Birds* were invited to be present.

The total attendance at the meeting was 51, including representatives from over 40 counties or other recording areas. Apologies for non-attendance were received from a further 15 recorders.

There was no formal agenda for the meeting, but a provisional one had been assembled beforehand, by M. J. Rogers, Secretary of the *BB* Rarities Committee, and the Chairman. A number of items were added to it, and in the end some 16 different subjects were discussed, though with considerable overlap between some of them.

The meeting opened with a discussion on the function and content of county bird reports. Whilst many, if not all, of these began as a means of publishing the records of the members of a particular local society, several have expanded that role into a comprehensive and, very importantly, consistent annual record of the status of the birds of a given area. The greater the moves in this direction, the more useful such reports become, but it was realised within the meeting that there is great variation in the time that recorders can devote to producing their reports, as well as major differences in the finances available for their production by the societies and clubs concerned.

The importance of county reports in a national context was stressed. A number of surveys, particularly of status changes of birds, have made use of them. It has been common for the authors of such surveys to highlight the advantages to them of having uniform standards of presentation of systematic lists within reports, not just of species order, but preferably with some form of species numbering, too. Whilst this was agreed as a useful aim, there was no consensus as to the way forward to achieve it.

An additional point raised during this discussion was the need to have one or more central libraries where county reports were deposited, both for use by researchers and as a record of British ornithology. At present, collections can be found at the Alexander Library, within the Edward Grey Institute, Oxford; at the RSPB; and at the BTO, but none is anything like complete. It was recommended that all societies and clubs should ensure that copies of their reports are regularly deposited at all three libraries.

The BTO representative spoke about the plans for a national centre of ornithology at Tring, and said that the BTO was looking at ways of increasing the help they could offer to county societies. This could include central computerisation of records and guidance over uniformity of their treatment.

The idea of an English Bird Report, similar to those covering Scotland and Wales, was raised but, as on past occasions when it has been discussed, without any practical suggestions for its implementation.

The next major topic on the agenda was that of scarce birds: those which fall between the species dealt with by the BBRC and those of regular occurrence. A revision of the book *Scarce Migrant Birds in Britain and Ireland* (1974) was in progress, but there was still a need for some

systematic collection and regular analysis of, in particular, those species dropped from the BBRC list. Some progress was reported, with a small panel willing to take on the work of collecting the records with the intention of publishing a five-yearly or ten-yearly review. It was very apparent that a central collection of county bird reports would greatly aid this panel in its work.

The decision of the BBRC to drop Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* from its deliberations was announced to the meeting. A paper on the identification problems of the species, especially immatures, was promised for *British Birds* (now published, 81: 126-134), while the BBRC remained willing to help county recorders with difficult records.

The recent upsurge in pelagic trips by birdwatchers, particularly off the south and west coasts, had produced the problem of how the records of such trips, often containing many sightings of unusual species, should be dealt with. The BBRC and the BOU now accepted the International Maritime Limit of 200 miles (322 km) as within their remit for rare and new species, but it was asking a lot of a county, such as Cornwall, to incorporate the sometimes voluminous records into their county report. It was suggested, and widely agreed, that records from pelagic trips were out of place in county reports, which should stick to their present limit of three miles (4.8 km), or whatever could be seen from the land. It was hoped that the Seabird Group or the Royal Naval Birdwatching Society would collect and perhaps publish such records.

There was general agreement on the next point, which concerned the treatment of feral and escaped species. The populations of some feral species, such as Greylag Goose *Anser anser*, Ring-necked Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* and Mandarin Aix *galericulata*, were growing fast and spreading, and it was important to have a record of this. County recorders were urged to include all Category C and D species in their main systematic lists. The BBRC was keen to be able to measure the escape rate of species of potentially wild occurrence, and the county reports were the natural place for such records to be published.

Relations between neighbouring counties is, in general, excellent, but the need was expressed for maximum co-operation when dealing with records from, for example, large estuaries which were split between two counties. It was felt preferable for both county reports to include the records for the whole site, though obviously this must be clearly stated. As an example where a site is mainly, though not wholly, within one county, the case of the gravel-pit complex on the Gloucestershire/Wiltshire border was quoted. The satisfactory solution arrived at there was for records from the whole complex to be published in the Gloucestershire Report, while the Wiltshire Report restricted itself to the records from the rather few pits within its boundary.

The vexed question of changing county boundaries was aired. Almost all societies had adjusted their boundaries following the major changes in 1974, but, as was pointed out, the Metropolitan Counties have now been abolished, thus posing further problems in those areas. There was no ideal solution, though it was regarded as essential that the recording area was

clearly shown in each report, with details of any changes that had taken place in the past.

It was clear, from a lively discussion, that relations between county bird societies and wardens of reserves within the county are sometimes not as good as they should be. Most wardens probably submit reports to their parent body (e.g. the NCC, the RSPB, the Wildfowl Trust), but there was clearly often no organised way in which such reports could then find their way to the county recorder. Sometimes, there was excellent co-operation between the warden and the county recorder, but then a change of warden could result in a complete cessation of records. Even when it was the policy of the national organisation for their wardens to co-operate at the local level, there could be serious communication problems. It was suggested that, in case of real difficulty, a letter from the county recorder to the headquarters of the national organisation might help the situation.

The final topic discussed concerned the problems associated with 'mass twitches', and also twitches at sites holding rare breeding birds. On the whole, it was felt that there were few serious occurrences, though some recorders felt that they were placed in an invidious position when asked to suppress the record of some rare species, especially when this was due to some anti-twitching feeling and not solely to protect the bird or its nesting site.

The meeting closed with the Chairman thanking everyone for their attendance and, especially, for the ample comments and discussion which had taken place. It was obvious that the meeting had been very worthwhile, and that the calling of it had fulfilled a clear need.

*British Birds* intends to call a second meeting of County Bird Recorders in two or three years' time, and thereafter to promote further such meetings at regular intervals. Items for inclusion in the next agenda should be sent to the address below.

*Dr M. A. Ogilvie, Glencairn, Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay, Argyll PA49 7UN*

## Obituary

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### **Bernard King (1907-1987)**

**B**ernard King was an exceptional birdwatcher. Unbounding enthusiasm, great kindness to others and an intense desire to commit his observations to paper were the hallmarks of this amateur ornithologist. Many young birdwatchers, some of whom have gone on to put their interest to professional advantage, had him to thank for settling them in an engrossing hobby.



91. Bernard King (1907-1987), Cornwall, June 1977 (K. E. L. Simmons)

Bernard was born on 9th August 1907, in Bristol, of Cornish parents, and those two areas were eventually to dominate his life and his birdwatching. He attended Bristol Grammar School and Kent College, Canterbury, before taking an Honours Diploma in ceramics at Stoke-on-Trent. He took up birdwatching late by today's standards, in 1937, when in his thirtieth year. By the time war came, he was totally absorbed by the new hobby, and he continued to make observations during this difficult period, when conditions permitted. Indeed, his first contribution to *British Birds* was during the war, and the idea was suggested by H. F. Witherby when Bernard (kitted out in his Army private's uniform) called on him at his house. Bernard was always keen to acknowledge Harry Witherby's help with this note ('Unusual migrants in Surrey', *Brit. Birds* 36: 76) and many subsequent ones. Another early mentor of Bernard's was Humphrey Tetley of the Bristol City Museum.

All activity was interrupted, however, by active service overseas, first in Africa attached to the Royal West Africa Frontier Force and then in Norway with the army of liberation. Reunited once more with his wife, Marjorie, and their young daughter, Elizabeth, after the war, he settled back into their bungalow, 'Mayfield', in Saltford, near Bath (soon to be the 'hub' of much ornithological activity), where he joined the staff of the Ministry of Defence (Naval)—'the Admiralty'—as a civilian, in 1945.

He quickly established himself as one of the most active birdwatchers in the 'Bristol district' (he liked to define the area around Bristol in this way) and in Cornwall, where he spent his annual leave in late summer or autumn every year from then until his retirement in 1971, when he moved down to Newlyn.

Excursions in winter included The New Grounds in Gloucestershire, where goose-watching then was not as easy, but possibly much more exciting than now. Bernard took a keen interest in the developments there as Peter Scott established The Wildfowl Trust. The 'wilderness' may have been encroached upon, but Bernard could see the benefits. He became an honorary warden and was a judge at the annual Christmas/New Year competition for school teams. He would put any amount of effort into helping youngsters with their birdwatching. He organised a group of them in Saltford, and the keener members joined him on some of his other activities, especially duck counts. These he organised in Somerset for 23 years, from 1947 until 1971; it is as a duck-counter that many people remember Bernard. When Chew Valley Lake was flooded in 1952, he counted almost the very first birds to arrive, and during the following two years he held the only birdwatching permit, much to the chagrin of other local birdwatchers. He counted Chew in both summer and winter and walked the 19-km circuit regularly in all weathers. He also organised the BTO's Heronry Census in Somerset for 15 years (1953-68) and was a prominent member of the Bristol Naturalists' Society, being one of its Vice-Presidents as well as serving on several of its Committees and, not least, taking an active interest in the junior section of the Society. He also regularly attended two groups of informal gatherings, the 'Redstarts' in Bath and the 'Waxwings' in Bristol, during which birdwatching activities were discussed amongst friends.

What Bernard enjoyed most of all, though, was being out in the field, watching birds. Keen to see a rare bird, yes (he and David Hunt added Northern Parula *Parula americana* to the British and Irish List: *Brit. Birds* 63: 149-151), but he also earnestly endeavoured to find out as much as he could about the common birds, which he felt many people ignored. His notebooks were quickly filled with the raw material which he was to draw on over the years to come. Within ten years of the war, he had 28 'Short notes' published in *BB*, and the following three decades produced an amazing flow of yet more Notes (some co-authored), not only to this journal, in which a total of 164 Notes has been published to date, but also another 86 spread through issues of *Reports of the Wildfowl Trust* (16), *Sea Swallow* (7), *Florida Field Naturalist* (10), *Somerset Bird Report* (1), *The Avicultural Magazine* (1) and *Bristol Ornithology* (51). It is an exceptional



contribution to the ornithological literature. Bernard's friend, Dr K. E. L. Simmons, recently described him as 'an ornithological miniaturist': a description that Bernard would have liked, for, although he wrote eight papers (three jointly), he always preferred to concentrate on writing his 'Notes'. He was well aware of his limitations, and left it to others to connect his observations of detail to the broader spectrum.

What his contributions reveal is his overriding interest in the behaviour of birds, particularly that related to migrant birds or to feeding. About one-fifth of his Notes report on migrants—unusual occurrences or numbers—and on identification or plumage characteristics. He took great pains to check through the literature, a task made easier by his own very extensive library of books and journals.

Amongst the papers are two, written jointly with his friend and duck-counting colleague, Hugh Boyd, on wildfowl subjects. 'A breeding population of Mallard' (*11th Report of the Wildfowl Trust* 1958/59: 137-143) was a study at four North Somerset reservoirs, which showed the enormous impact of the recent flooding of Chew Valley Lake (a more than doubling of the pairs) and also looked at aspects of breeding success, and the other was on the 'Effects of the severe winter on ducks in north Somerset' (*15th Report of the Wildfowl Trust* 1962/63: 47-50). Typically, his paper on 'The incidence of albinism and melanism in grebes' (*Bristol Orn.* 6: 25-28) and its sequel, 'Additional records of . . .' (*Bristol Orn.* 8: 108-109), started from his discovery that an albinistic Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* which he saw at Durleigh reservoir, Somerset, was the first ever recorded in Britain and Ireland.

Although some of his Notes may have been slight in content and others of seemingly well-known behaviour (although, in fact, previously unrecorded), he would be quick to put down such criticisms (if that's what they sounded like) by pointing out how often his work was cited by other writers (e.g. 35 times in the first four volumes of *BWP*). He had no doubt about the value of the Notes, and urged many other people to follow his example. He enjoyed his reputation as 'Short Note King', as he was affectionately dubbed.

When the Bristol Ornithological Club was formed in 1966, Bernard became its first Honorary Life Member, in recognition of his distinguished service to ornithology in the Bristol area. He was tremendously excited by the prospects for the new Club, and over the years was one of its most loyal advocates. Many of the Club's early Committee meetings were held at his bungalow, where the Committee would take over the lounge whilst Bernard and Marjorie exiled themselves to the kitchen and other rooms, to appear only at the end, with trays of coffee and cakes. Visitors to 'Mayfield' or 'Gull Cry' (in Newlyn) soon realised that Bernard and Marjorie provided hospitality that was unstoppable.

After the move to Cornwall, Bernard retained his close connection with the Club, and often travelled up to Bristol to attend meetings. But retirement to Cornwall now gave Bernard not just more opportunities to study migrants, but also seabirds—another passion of his. In 1946, he applied for membership of the Royal Naval Birdwatching Society,



normally open only to service personnel, but a change in the rules enabled him to become the first civilian member.

His enthusiasm and stamina were epitomised by one trip he made in 1973. Confident that there was great potential in pelagic birdwatching, he enrolled as a 'supernumerary' with the crew of 16 on the MV *Goram*, a 1,600-ton cargo ship due to sail from Penzance to Sardinia. During an alarming episode, when the engines and generator had failed and the vessel drifted helplessly for 18 hours through the night in a stormy Bay of Biscay, Bernard was on deck in the darkness listening to a number of Wilson's Petrels *Oceanites oceanicus* calling as they flew around the ship. His description of this event and the many others on the ill-fated journey left those who heard it both enthralled and astonished. The Wilson's Petrel saga is vividly recalled in a short paper (*Bristol Orn.* 11: 31-32).

It was on another such pelagic birdwatching trip, although this time on calmer seas, that Bernard died on 26th March 1987. He was in Florida with Marjorie, visiting their daughter and grandchildren. He was in excellent form by all accounts, and had gone off on a day's birdwatching on a fishing vessel to look for seabirds off Florida's east coast, when he was struck down by a heart attack. His ashes were later scattered at sea off Newlyn, from the Mousehole lifeboat, on a beautiful calm day.

For a purely amateur ornithologist who claimed, with genuine humility and sincerity, to 'know very little about birds', Bernard's contribution to British ornithology is unique. And there are many birdwatchers who will have good reason to remember him with gratitude. ROBIN PRYTHERCH

## Monthly marathon

What was that diving bird (plate 34)?

Competitors named it as:

Red-necked Grebe <i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	(22%)
Black-necked Grebe <i>P. nigricollis</i>	(21%)
Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	(16%)
Shag <i>P. aristotelis</i>	(14%)
Scaup <i>Aythya marila</i>	(13%)
Slavonian Grebe <i>Podiceps auritus</i>	(6%)

with a few votes for Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*, Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, Socotra Cormorant *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*, Pochard *A. ferina*, Ferruginous Duck *A. nyroca*, Tufted Duck *A. fuligula*, Smew *Mergus albellus* and Red-breasted Merganser *M. serrator*.

When we set this photograph as January's problem picture, we did not anticipate that it would be especially difficult. But then *we* knew the answer. As it turns out, only four people got it right, and, unfortunately, they did not include Graham Walbridge, whose magnificent run of seven-in-a-row has now ended. The correct answer was Red-breasted Merganser, this bird being photographed in Scotland by Wendy Dickson.

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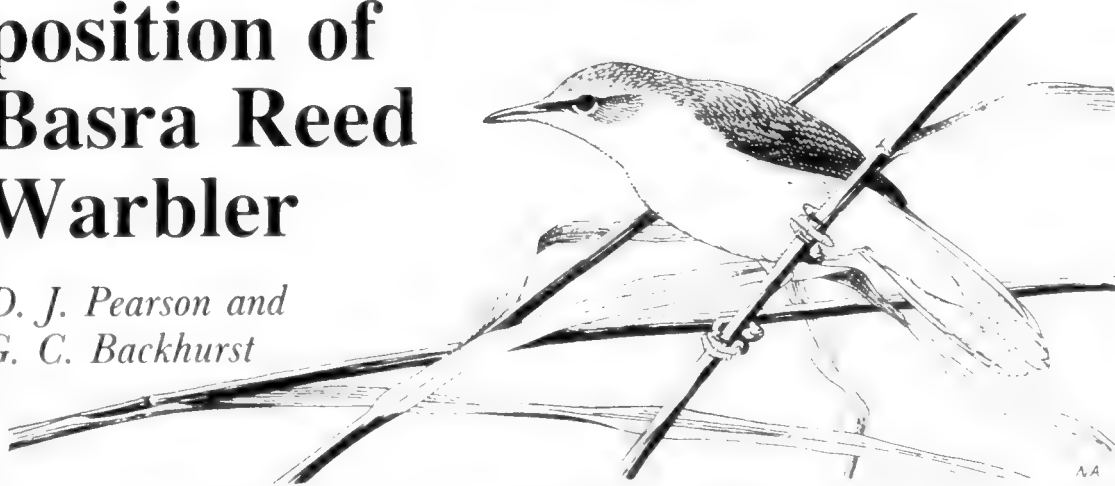


92. Second 'Monthly marathon' competition. Photograph number 12. Identify the species. Read the rules on page 49 in the January 1988 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th May 1988

The new leaders of this competition are Anthony McGeehan (with a four-in-a-row sequence so far), E. Brodie (with a three-in-a-row sequence), and Alan Walsh and Mark Berney (each with just one right so far). The pressure is now all on Anthony McGeehan, who needs another six right, with not a single slip in his sequence, to win the SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday to Africa, Asia or North America. Since diving birds seem to be difficult, perhaps we'll slot another one in soon, to test everyone's mettle. This month's puzzle, however, appears as plate 92. Have a go!

## Characters and taxonomic position of Basra Reed Warbler

*D. J. Pearson and  
G. C. Backhurst*



**I**n Europe, the Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* ranges widely and breeds south to the Mediterranean, extending also to northwest Africa. In Asia, it breeds through the USSR east to about

85°E; farther south, it is replaced in the Near East and from Iran to the western Himalayas by the Clamorous Reed Warbler *A. stentoreus*, and in Iraq by the much smaller, slender-billed Basra Reed Warbler *A. (arundinaceus) griseldis*.

The Basra Reed Warbler was described by Hartlaub, not from Asia but from a specimen collected by Emin Pasha at Nguru, some 200 km west of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania (Hartlaub 1891). The bird was subsequently found in Lower Iraq (Ticehurst 1920, 1922), to which its breeding appears to be restricted and where Vaurie (1959) gave its range as 'the marshes along the Euphrates and Tigris from north of Baghdad to Basra and Fao'. Hartlaub called his new taxon *Calamoherpe griseldis*. The bird continued to be treated as a full species, though within the genus *Acrocephalus*, by, for example, Ticehurst (1922), Jackson (1938), and Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1960). Vaurie (1959), White (1960) and Williamson (1968), however, among others have preferred to regard it as a race of the Great Reed Warbler, and it has been accorded similar status in the recent eleventh volume of Peters's *Check-list of birds of the World* (Mayr *et al.* 1986). As a result, it has been of limited interest to European ornithologists, and has received scant attention in the popular literature.

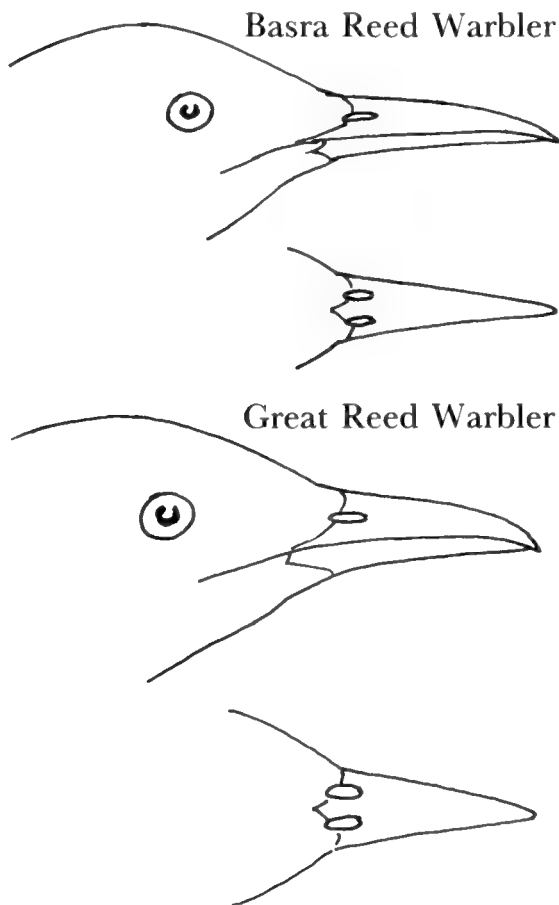


Fig. 1 Bill profiles and plans of Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus (arundinaceus) griseldis* (top) and Great Reed Warbler *A. arundinaceus* (bottom)

Two other forms of the Great Reed Warbler complex have often been lumped under *A. arundinaceus*. The Eastern Great Reed Warbler *A. (arundinaceus) orientalis* of eastern Asia, treated as a race of *arundinaceus* by Vaurie (1959), Williamson (1968) and Voous (1977), but separated by Mayr *et al.* (1986), has a shorter and rather more rounded wing than Great Reed. In voice, habits, plumage coloration and bill size and shape, however, it resembles Great Reed very closely. The Clamorous Reed Warbler *A. stentoreus* is treated as a full species by Vaurie, Williamson and Voous, but was lumped under *arundinaceus* by, for example, Dementiev & Gladkov (1954) and Meinertzhagen (1954). Its wing is still more rounded, and the bill, although as long as that of Great Reed, is narrower (but not so slim as that of Basra Reed, see fig. 1). The Clamorous Reed Warbler breeds east and southwest of the Basra Reed and is less strongly

migratory. It is larger, and heavier-billed than Basra Reed; and the Red Sea and Near Eastern populations are much more warmly coloured. Its grating and clucking call notes recall those of Great Reed rather than Basra Reed.

The Basra Reed Warbler winters in eastern parts of Africa. Fewer than 30 individuals had been recorded from that continent up to 1970, but movements and wintering range have since become much better known. From late October/December to March/early April, it occurs from southern Somalia through eastern Kenya and eastern Tanzania to Malawi and Mozambique to at least 17°S (Pearson *et al.* 1978; Hanmer 1979; Ash & Miskell 1981; Pearson 1982), with one record from the Transvaal (J. C. Sinclair *in litt.*). There are now also many records from Ethiopia for the period September-November (Ash 1981 and *in litt.*) and it is regular on autumn passage on the Sudan coast during late August to mid October (Nikolaus 1981; Nikolaus & Backhurst 1982; G. Nikolaus *in litt.*); it is also known from Saudi Arabia (Jennings 1981). The bird is particularly well known to us in Kenya, where over 700 have been caught on southward passage at the Ngulia ringing site in Tsavo West National Park (Pearson & Backhurst 1976), and where it appears to be the commonest wintering *Acrocephalus* on the Lower Tana floodplain (Pearson *et al.* 1978). The purpose of this paper is to describe the features of this West Palearctic breeding bird, in the hand and in the field, as observed in Kenya, and to stress reasons for our view that this and the Great Reed Warbler are decidedly different species.

The coloration of the Basra Reed Warbler is best appreciated on recently moulted individuals. Moulting occurs in Africa, but some 70-80% of those caught in Kenya and Malawi during November-December are already in fresh plumage or have moulted all except their outer primaries. Most thus appear to moult during an autumn stopover in Ethiopia, and only a minority do so in their final winter quarters. Plumage is already somewhat worn by the time that they return to their breeding grounds. The upperparts are uniform cold olivaceous-brown, lacking the warm



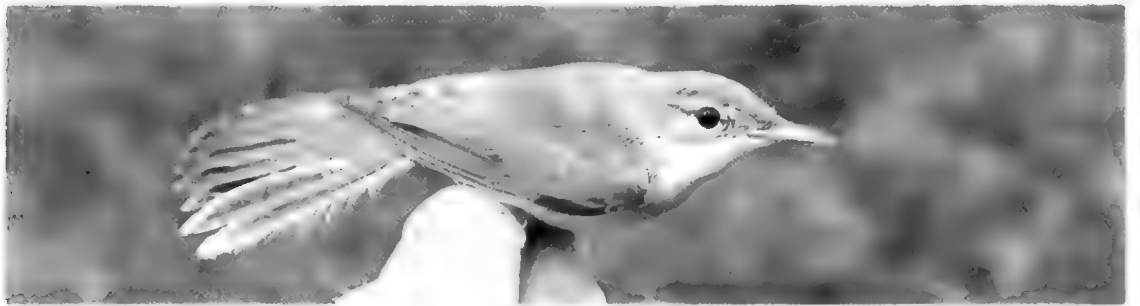
93. Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus (arundinaceus) griseldis* (after moult), Kenya, December 1982 (G. C. Backhurst)



94. Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus (arundinaceus) griseldis* (after moulting), Kenya, December 1986 (G. C. Backhurst)



95. Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (after moulting), Kenya, December 1986 (G. C. Backhurst)



96. Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* (after moulting), Kenya, December 1986 (G. C. Backhurst)

97. Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus*, Sudan, September 1981 (D. J. Pearson)



**Table 1. Measurements (mm) and weights (g) of Basra Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus (arundinaceus) griseldis*, Great Reed Warblers *A. arundinaceus* and Reed Warblers *A. scirpaceus* trapped in Kenya**

Reed Warblers: eastern birds, mostly of the race *fuscus*. Wing and tail measurements made only on fresh-plumaged birds. Weights given only for lean birds with fat rating *I* (see Pearson & Backhurst 1976)

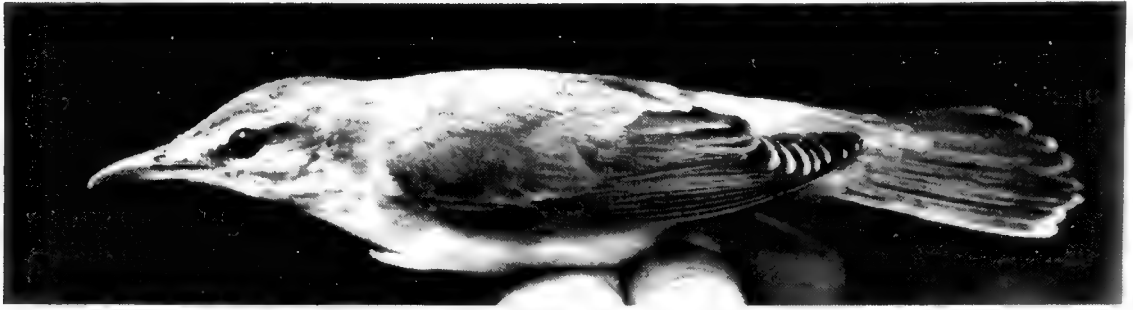
Attribute	BASRA REED WARBLER			GREAT REED WARBLER			REED WARBLER		
	n	Range	Mean	n	Range	Mean	n	Range	Mean
Wing	(100)	78-88	(83.8)	(100)	89-103	(96.4)	(100)	64-75	(68.7)
Tail	(24)	58-67	(63.1)	(24)	72-81	(76.7)	(20)	51-57	(53.8)
Tarsus	(29)	24-27	(25.2)	(24)	27-31	(29.0)	(23)	21-24	(22.7)
Bill to skull	(25)	20-24	(23.0)	(24)	20-25	(23.8)	(23)	16-19	(18.0)
Bill to rear of nostril	(22)	13.5-15.5	(14.5)	(24)	13.5-16	(14.7)	(100)	10-12.5	(11.1)
Bill width across rear of nostril	(22)	4.4-5.4	(4.8)	(24)	5.6-6.4	(6.0)	(100)	3.7-4.8	(4.2)
Weight	(100)	13.4-18.8	(15.7)	(44)	21.2-33.5	(27.5)	(100)	9.0-11.9	(10.4)

tinge of nominate Great Reed Warbler, and darker and without the greyish tone of the central Asian *zarudnyi*; in fresh plumage, the tail is very dark. The underparts are much whiter than on nominate Great Reed, with a cold buffish wash confined to the flanks; in contrast to Great Reed, Basra lacks fine streaks on the throat. The supercilium is whitish (not buffish as on Great Reed), and, though narrow, quite prominent, extending from the base of the bill to well behind the eye; a contrasting dark streak through the eye is well emphasised. Bill and eye colour are similar to those of Great Reed, but the legs and feet of Basra are invariably dull greyish, in contrast to the typical pale brown of Great Reed.

Wing, tail, tarsus and bill measurements of the Basra Reed Warbler are compared in table 1 with those of Great Reed Warbler and Reed Warbler *A. scirpaceus*. Except where otherwise stated, figures concern fresh-plumaged individuals caught in Kenya. Weight ranges are also given for lean individuals. Some measurements of sexed museum specimens are summarised in table 2. With respect to most measurements, Basra Reed is just about intermediate between the other two, with weights nearer to those of Reed. The bill, however, is the really distinctive feature: about as long as that of Great Reed, but thin and narrow (see also fig. 1 and plates 93-101). In proportion, the tail is slightly shorter than that of Great Reed, but the wing is long and pointed with a substantial 'primary projection'.

**Table 2. Measurements (mm) of sexed museum specimens of Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus (arundinaceus) griseldis* and Great Reed Warbler *A. arundinaceus***

Attribute	BASRA REED WARBLER				GREAT REED WARBLER			
	♂♂ (5)		♀♀ (4)		♂♂ (10)		♀♀ (10)	
	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean
Wing	82-85	(83.0)	78-84	(81.0)	93-99	(95.5)	89-96	(91.3)
Tail	62-67	(64.6)	58-64	(62.0)	74-81	(77.5)	73-80	(76.1)
Tarsus	25-26	(25.8)	24-26	(24.8)	29-31	(30.0)	27-29	(28.4)
Bill (to skull)	20-24	(22.4)	22-23	(22.2)	23-25	(24.1)	20-24	(22.9)



98. Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (after moulting), Kenya, December 1985 (D. J. Pearson)

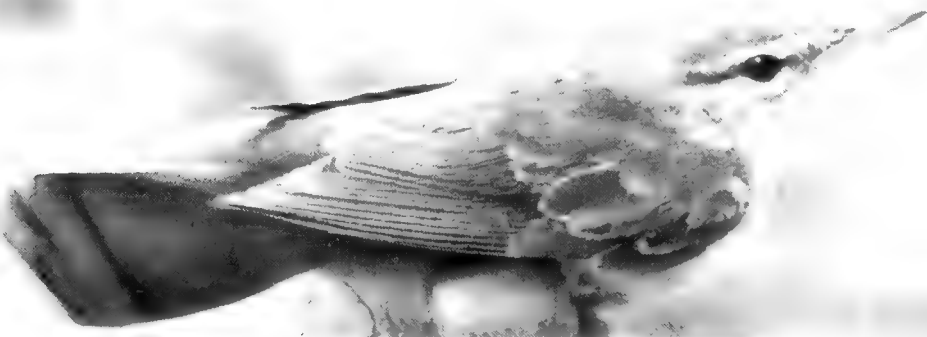


99. Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (after moulting), Kenya, December 1985 (G. C. Backhurst)



100. Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus (arundinaceus) griseldis* (after moulting), Kenya, December 1985 (G. C. Backhurst)

101. Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus (arundinaceus) griseldis* (before moulting), Kenya, December 1983 (D. J. Pearson)

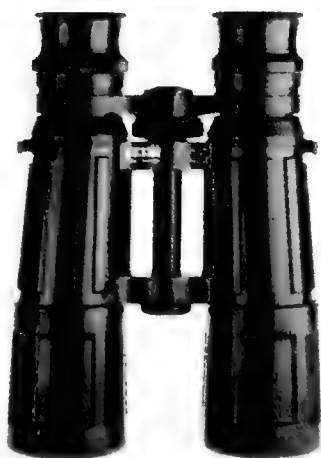




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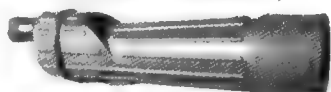
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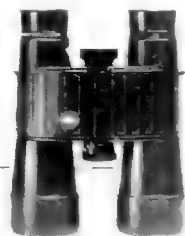
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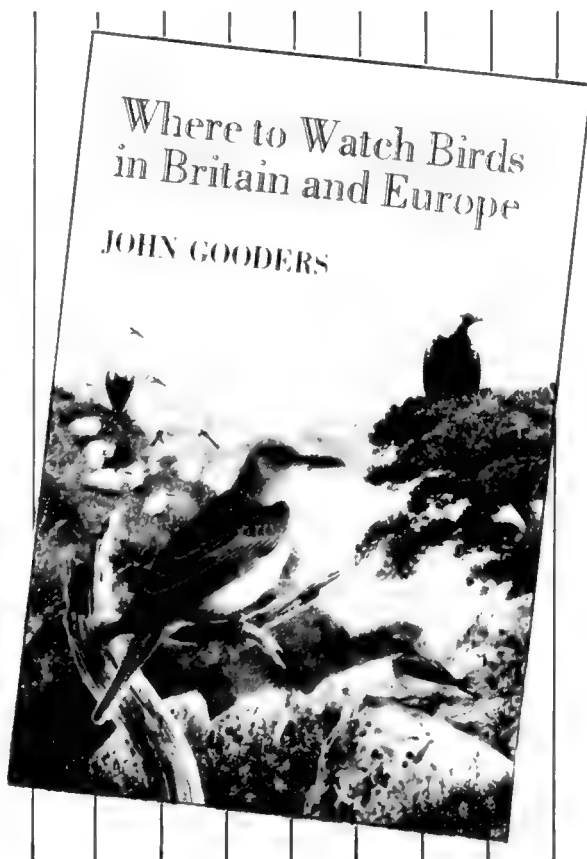
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The wing formula, with the 3rd-4th primaries longest and the notch on the inner web of the 2nd primary falling, on the closed wing, between the tips of the 6th-8th primaries, is similar to that of Great Reed; this has presumably been one of the reasons for the 'lumping' of the two forms as one species.

The voice of the Basra Reed Warbler is quite different from that of Great Reed. The typical call-note is a harsh 'chaarr', rather louder than the similar note of the Reed Warbler. The song, which may be heard in Kenya from January to March, is a rather subdued sequence of notes, 'chuc-chuc-churruc-churruc-chuc . . .', less squeaky and with a less forceful rhythm than the song of Reed, and quieter than and without the guttural, grating quality of that of Great Reed.

In Kenya, wintering Basra Reed Warblers frequent moist green thicket, sedge and rank undergrowth habitat similar to that utilised by Marsh A. *palustris* and Reed Warblers, and sometimes occur alongside one or other of those species. They have a greater preference, however, for cover adjacent to water, over drying lakes and floodpans and along ditches. On the Lower Tana, where they occur together with Great Reed Warblers, they mainly inhabit bushes and thickets, whereas Great Reeds are more dependent on stands of tall grass.

In the field, the Basra Reed Warbler gives the impression of a large, slim, dark-tailed Reed Warbler rather than a small Great Reed Warbler. The long, slender bill is the most distinctive single feature, separating it easily from Great Reed. Additionally, the combination of white-looking underparts, long distinct supercilium and greyish legs should distinguish it readily from Reed and Marsh Warblers. Reed Warblers of the eastern race *fuscus* are white below and lack warmth on the mantle, but are paler above than Basra, with a shorter bill, a less distinct supercilium and browner legs.

In view of its far smaller size, consistent and distinctive plumage differences, very different bill shape, different leg colour and different song, we feel that there is no justification for continuing to regard the Basra Reed Warbler as a race of Great Reed.

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*G. C. Backhurst, Box 24702, Nairobi, Kenya*

## Notes

### **Pied-billed Grebe catching fish attracted by man**

I was very interested in Dan Crawley's recent note (*Brit. Birds* 80: 72-73) describing how a Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* caught fish attracted by bread thrown to waterbirds. I had rather a similar experience involving a Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* at Lake Eola, Orlando, Florida, USA, on 8th April 1981. In this case, however, the 'bait' was 'wild bird seed' which visitors had obtained from a slot machine and thrown to feral Rock Doves *Columba livia* and Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis* on the grass banks of the lake. Inevitably, some spilled into the clear shallow water, causing a sudden influx of numerous small fish (probably all less than 50 mm long). A Pied-billed Grebe resting on the surface then became extremely active and, after making food-scanning movements, thrusting its head in and out of the water and moving it from side to side, it dived. In the clear water, its feeding behaviour could be noted. It used its wings to propel itself in pursuit of its prey, though seldom obtained one immediately from a direct dive. On every occasion, its victim was brought to the surface, where most of them were mandibulated and softened by a rapid bill action passing from one end of the fish's body to the other, beaten on the water, and swallowed, head first. A few of the larger fish were also summarily dealt with as described, but, at times, the grebe had difficulty in



coping with them and momentarily released them on the surface, where they were subjected to fierce jabblings. There were also occasions when the grebe, still holding its prey, swam to and fro under water before finally surfacing to swallow it. I have observed this behaviour previously, around Penzance and Newlyn harbours, Cornwall, when Great Northern Divers *Gavia immer* were catching small shore crabs *Carcinus maenas* and '... having held it in its bill for a short while, dived again with it.' (*Brit. Birds* 69: 497-498).

The feeding behaviour of the Pied-billed Grebe lasted only while the grain was attracting the fish, which I later ascertained from Mr G. Bretze were immature blue gills *Lepomis macrochirus*. The late BERNARD KING

**Diving times and intervals of feeding Ferruginous Duck** There appears to be very little published information on the feeding behaviour of Ferruginous Ducks *Aythya nyroca*, in particular on their diving for food and intervals between dives. *BWP* vol. 1 (page 574) states that food is taken from the surface, when swimming with the head submerged, by up-ending and by diving; that diving times are up to 40-50 seconds, but probably normally less; and that, in Hungary, feeding was mostly in depths of 20-70 cm, but up to 1.6 m.

From late December 1984 to early February 1985, a male Ferruginous Duck was present at Drift Reservoir, Cornwall. Poor weather throughout made observation difficult, but when visiting the reservoir I always stayed in one of the partly sheltered bays. This was a favourite feeding area for the duck if undisturbed, and I managed to obtain the following data on its feeding behaviour. The duck fed in depths of 0.5 to 1.5 m, and, using a stop-watch, I timed 193 dives and 184 corresponding pauses between dives. The maximum diving time was 22 seconds, the minimum 3 seconds, and the mean 17.24 seconds; the maximum interval between dives was 31 seconds, the minimum 2 seconds, and the mean 11.59 seconds. During one continuous midday feeding period of 54 minutes, 122 dives and the same number of intervals were timed. On the other hand, the Ferruginous Duck frequently made only one or two dives, then spent long intervals roosting or swimming idly about on the surface. Only twice during long periods of watching was food brought to the surface, where it was immediately swallowed. The duck made no attempt to scan for food with its head submerged, or to up-end. It was seldom seen in flight, but left the area of the bay by swimming quietly away.

Owing to bad weather, I had to concentrate on the Ferruginous Duck and so was unable, unfortunately, to make comparative observations on other diving ducks present, which varied their locations more on the reservoir.

I am grateful to Prof. G. V. T. Matthews for his helpful comments on this note. The late BERNARD KING

**American Golden Plover calling from ground** Early in the morning on 5th October 1980, at Drift Reservoir, Cornwall, I heard an American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* call while resting on an old tree trunk a little

offshore. It gave soft but clear 'tue-tue' calls whenever small waders, such as Dunlins *Calidris alpina*, passed low over it; as it called, it stretched its neck upwards and then brought it down quickly in a concertina-like manner. This behaviour continued sporadically for at least 20 minutes before the plover departed to another part of the reservoir. This was the first time I had heard this species call from the ground. I have frequently heard Golden Plovers *P. apricaria* do so (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 75: 32), but I have never scrutinised them carefully enough to see if they also stretched their necks while calling.

The late BERNARD KING

**Sanderlings flocking with Turnstones to take bread** In a recent note (*Brit. Birds* 74: 521-522), I referred to Sanderlings *Calidris alba* eating bread, a habit previously reported from Devon (*Brit. Birds* 59: 194). Man-made foods are not listed in the food of Sanderlings in *BWP* (3: 286), although bread is mentioned in the diet of Turnstones *Arenaria interpres*. (It may perhaps be assumed that the Devon record, because it was just a 'one-off' affair, did not warrant inclusion in *BWP*.) I should like, therefore, to put on record the following observations, which may help to advance a little our knowledge of the diet of both species.

During visits with my family to areas of the 88-km sandy beach between Cocoa Beach and Datona, Florida, USA, in December 1983 and January 1984, not only were large numbers of Laughing *Larus atricilla* and Ring-billed Gulls *L. delawarensis* there to scavenge food from visitors, but also, rather surprisingly, flocks of Sanderlings with Turnstones. These mixed flocks of waders, sometimes 40 or more, with Turnstones about three to two in preponderance, adopted a feeding strategy enabling them to avoid too much aggression from the gulls: they would advance towards us to within 3-4m, the Turnstones always taking the lead and quickly eating larger pieces of bread. The Sanderlings, however, obtained a fair share of the food that we distributed, but ate smaller pieces. If they needed to break open large pieces, they flew to the tideline to soften them before swallowing. On every occasion that they did so, individual Sanderlings were attacked by a number of gulls, which pursued the wader in zigzag flight up and down the beach or even well out to sea for up to seven or eight minutes, but never succeeded in inducing the Sanderling to release the food (I think that the gulls often gave up through exhaustion). The Turnstones never resorted to the same behaviour, but always stayed near us or other visitors.

We sometimes visited remote areas of the vast beach and dunes while no other human beings were present. It was not long before mixed flocks of Sanderlings and Turnstones approached us for food. We often came across Semipalmated Plovers *Charadrius semipalmatus*, Grey Plovers *Pluvialis squatarola* and Willets *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*, but these species fed more or less near the water's edge and did not come for food items. It is interesting that both Sanderlings and Turnstones frequently called when feeding: the former gave persistent, rather quiet, but excited 'twitterings', while the Turnstones uttered rather hard and loud guttural noises.

I suggest that this feeding behaviour is comparatively new for Sanderlings, and that they have learned it by watching feeding Turnstones, with

which they often associate closely in winter. It would, therefore, be of some interest if the views of others could be obtained, although, as with so many common practices among birds, old habits are almost wholly neglected by ornithologists.

The late BERNARD KING

**Strategy of inland feeding Turnstones** On 28th August 1983, at Carnaquidden Farm, Gulval, Penzance, Cornwall, 16 km and 6 km from the Atlantic and English Channel coasts respectively, we were rather surprised to find two Turnstones *Arenaria interpres* feeding on elevated land at 122 m. They were foraging among soiled straw near farm buildings in typical Turnstone manner. Small earthworms and many grounded two-winged insects were taken avidly, but the main food items were yellow dung flies *Scatophaga stercoraria*, which were present in great numbers on the straw and seepage. Apparently the yellow dung fly has not been recorded in the diet of Turnstone. Robert E. Gill Jr recently emphasised that the Turnstone has one of the most varied diets of any wader (*Brit. Birds* 79: 402).

JOAN HAMPDEN SMITH and the late BERNARD KING

Carnaquidden Farm, Gulval, Penzance, Cornwall

**Possibly melanistic Kittiwake in Cornwall** On 8th May 1985, at St Ives Bay, Cornwall, I saw a distinctly odd-looking gull. It was about the size of a Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*, but appeared practically all black, except for a uniform grey patch in the centre of each wing and a dirty-white tail. When first seen, it was with Black-headed *Larus ridibundus*, Herring *L. argentatus* and Great Black-backed Gulls *L. marinus* and Kittiwakes, and was either stooping to the surface or resting on the sea taking edible items. A little later, it left its companions and alighted on rocks just below my vantage point. After a while, Peter Harrison was informed and he came to see it; he agreed that it was an extraordinary-looking bird the like of which was new to him, but after careful scrutiny from only a few metres he considered that it must be a Kittiwake with melanistic features. We felt sure that the bird was not contaminated by oil or any other material. The following description was taken:

Forehead and crown whitish to sooty-black; nape and mantle black; whole of tail dull dirty-white. Upperwing black, except for grey patch in centre of each wing and a white mirror on the outermost primary, deep black on primary tips: thus making bird very con-

spicuous in flight. Underwing blackish; rest of underparts all deep sooty-black. Eye-ring red, iris dark brown. Bill bright yellow, rather thick and slightly curved. Legs and webs dull black. Occasionally made unfamiliar 'creek-creek' noises.

Melanism has been recorded for Lesser Black-backed *L. fuscus*, Herring and Black-headed Gulls (*Brit. Birds* 55: 224-225), and Dr J. M. Harrison and Dr J. G. Harrison described a remarkable Black-headed Gull showing both albinism and melanism (*Brit. Birds* 55: 435-436, plate 71). Details of the St Ives Kittiwake were forwarded to Peter Grant, who commented (*in litt.*) that he was 'unaware of any proven case of melanism in gulls, and that in claims of melanistic birds (especially gulls) in-the-hand examination is essential so that the feathers can be treated with solvents to prove that the feathers are pigmented, and not just discoloured.' This rather throws into

question some past claims of melanism in birds, and I therefore suggest that the phenomenon be reviewed by *British Birds*. The late BERNARD KING



102. Possibly melanistic Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*, Cornwall, spring 1985 (via J. B. Bottomley)

What was undoubtedly this same individual was seen in early spring 1985, also at St Ives, by people who were not birdwatchers, one of whom obtained a photograph of it (plate 102). EDS

**Migrating Swallows feeding juveniles in flight** In late afternoon and evening on 5th September 1984, a hot and sultry day with a light northeast breeze, I came across a migration party of 35 Swallows *Hirundo rustica* and about 15 House Martins *Delichon urbica* at Cot Valley, St Just, Cornwall. After a short while, I noticed two Swallows momentarily come together at the peak of an upward flight, apparently touch bills, and then quickly break away. Consequently, I watched the hirundines for two hours until they all left the area. On 40 or more occasions, I found that this behaviour involved adult Swallows feeding juveniles on the wing. So far as I could ascertain, the actions were always the same: two birds met on an upward flight path, and an adult then fed a juvenile. It was, of course, impossible to know if adults were feeding their own young, but it seems a likely assumption that this was so. The martins made no attempt to behave similarly. It is well known for adult Swallows to feed resting juveniles in autumn, but I have been unable to find any records of hirundines on autumn passage feeding juveniles in flight. When I returned to Cot Valley the next day, I saw only two or three Swallows. The late BERNARD KING

**Water Pipit feeding in close association with man** On 6th March 1986, at Lamorna Cove, Cornwall, two men repairing the headland bordering a small metalled road were removing rock, grass and other plant material, thus exposing a bank of bare rock and earth. They informed me that for most of the day a very active small brownish bird had been around their feet or flitting up to the bank where they were working; it was very tame and unconcerned by the noise of their pickaxes and shovels. I soon found the bird, a Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*. It allowed me to approach to within 1 m

and I noticed it obtaining small earthworms and other items from the cliff wall and the road. This was the tamest Water Pipit that I had ever encountered, and I can find no mention in the literature of this species associating so closely with man.

The late BERNARD KING

**Unusually tame Water Pipit** On 22nd January 1985, at Warsash, Hampshire, a narrow path separating the River Hamble from a tidally flooded field was being repaired by a man operating a small earth-excavator. As I approached, I noticed a small brownish bird moving about among the mounds of earth. I soon realised that it was a Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*. For 15 minutes, I watched this surprisingly tame individual as it fed on small items among the spoil, and I was able to get to within 1.5-2m of the pipit without its showing any fear or anxiety. Ten Rock Pipits *A. petrosus* along the same 400-m stretch of path showed no apparent interest in the fortification activities or the potential feeding opportunities they offered, nor did they ever allow an approach closer than about 6m.

DAVID A. CHRISTIE

4 Steventon Road, Harefield, Southampton SO2 5HA

**Barred leucistic Blackbirds** On 2nd June 1984, in Cot Valley, St Just, Cornwall, we found, in a secluded garden, two juvenile leucistic Blackbirds *Turdus merula*. Although it is fairly common to see Blackbirds with albinistic characteristics, these were unlike any Blackbirds that we had previously encountered. Sometimes, they were joined by their normally plumaged parents. Although one juvenile was paler than the other, both were very pale cinnamon-grey to pale cinnamon-buff throughout. Indeed, their colour reminded us of that of Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto*. Equally striking, their lack of normal pigmentation resulted in their growth bars or fault bars on mantle, wings and tail being blatantly conspicuous (see plate 103 and fig. 1). As described by Lars Svensson (1975), *Identification Guide to European Passerines*, 'the distance between the bars and the width of each bar vary depending on, among other things, the growth rate of the feather



103. Juvenile Blackbird *Turdus merula*, Cornwall, June 1984 (Virian Stratton)

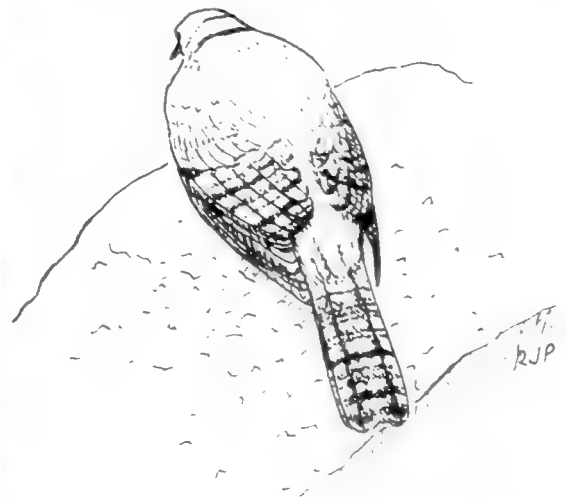


Fig. 1. Juvenile Blackbird *Turdus merula* showing lack of pigment and prominent fault bars on wings and tail (Drawn by Robin Prytherch from photographs by Virian Stratton)

and varying metabolic conditions'. The staple diet of these individuals, and their parents, seemed to be food provided on a bird-table. They were seen well irregularly into late September/early November in the valley and its vicinity. As Robin Prytherch has reminded us (*in litt.*), 'your Blackbirds would keep these flight feathers until late summer (i.e. one year), when it would have been interesting to see what degree of melanin the new feathers contained. The body feathers are moulted in the first autumn so, from your winter observations, it would seem the fault was persistent.'

The late BERNARD KING and VIVIAN STRATTON  
11 Corva Close, St Ives, Cornwall

### **Carrion Crow hiding food when attacked, and later recovering it**

Much has been written in *British Birds* during the last 40 years on hiding and recovery of food by members of the crow family (Corvidae), and over 30 years ago Derek Goodwin, in a note on Jays *Garrulus glandarius* and Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* recovering hidden food (*Brit. Birds* 48: 181-183), wrote: 'The storing and recovery of food by birds is of great interest, and certainly no instance of recovery should be thought unworthy of record.'

On 31st July 1975, as I walked across Marazion marsh, Cornwall, I came across a large and very hard piece of crusty bread. I threw this into the nearby river, which carried it slowly towards the beach. In a matter of moments, a Carrion Crow appeared and tried three times to snatch the food while in flight; it finally secured the crust by wading up to its underparts, and then returned to the bank. It had eaten at least half of the bread when two Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* arrived and endeavoured to snatch the rest. The crow took flight and carried the material to a very large pile of fresh seaweed along the tideline, where it proceeded to hide it: with forceful head-butting and bill movements, it soon opened a gap in the seaweed, placed the bread in, and quickly covered it over by side-to-side head movements. It immediately flew about 180 m and landed in a field, where it joined other Carrion Crows and Rooks *C. frugilegus*. I kept a careful watch on this particular crow, and saw it return after some 30 minutes to the beach and unhesitatingly find the spot where it had buried the bread; with a few bill movements, it soon uncovered the food and swallowed it.

The late BERNARD KING

## **Announcements**

### **'The Famous Grouse' Christmas whisky puzzle: the solution**

Following a meeting at Blunham, some of our rare men headed east for a spot of birding on a Norfolk heath. One of them, in the light of an earlier discussion while watching Linnets feeding in Tim Sharrock's Garden, was struck by the amazing series of coincidences in this upper scene, only to be told that, in one respect at least, he was showing his age.

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1. What were the coincidences? 2. What was his mistake? 3. Why did a passing ornithologically erudite policeman call on BB's Managing Editor and ask him to help the police with their enquiries? 4. Why did another member of the group think the subsequent (lower) scene nearby even more against the odds? 5. What was *his* odd-bird-out? 6. How many similar species could he have seen in Norfolk this year? 7. What is the minimum number of out-of-county day trips he would have to have made since 1967 to complete the list? 8. What species would have been suspect? 9. Where would he have celebrated with a bottle of *The Famous Grouse*? 10. Why?

Bryan Bland has supplied the following solution to his puzzle (above), which appeared in the December 1987 issue (page iv).

1. The specific term of the scientific name of each bird is indicated by its actions or associations. From the top, clockwise, the Tree Pipit (*A. trivialis*: prefix *tri* three and *via* road) is literally at the road junction; the Garden Warbler (*S. borin*: from *bos* ox) is from our viewpoint associated with oxen; the Rooks (*C. frugilegus*: *frux* gen. *frugus* fruits of the earth; *lego* collect) are busy crop-picking; the Wren (*T. troglodytes*: *trogli* hole; *duo* enter) is typically seeking cover; the Greenshank (*T. nebularia*: *nebula* mist) brings to mind its Norwegian vernacular name *skodde-fole*, mist-foal; and the Whinchat (*S. rubetra*: *rubus* bramble-bush), despite the gorse all around and in its English name, is perching on the only bramble stem.

2. The Song Thrush, however, is no longer associated with heaths. Our hypothetical rare man obviously cut his ornithological teeth on the Witherby *Handbook* or the *Observer's Book of British Birds* or one of the first Collins' field guides, such as 'Peterson' or 'Fitter & Richardson'—the days when *T. philomelos* ('music-loving') was known as *T. ericetorum* ('of the heaths': gen. plural of M. L. *ericetum* heath, Gr. *erike* heather) thanks to Lewin's false labelling of his sketch of a 'heath thrush' in 1796 and the erroneous nomenclature perpetuated by Turton in 1807.

3. The passing policeman, assessing the situation in an instant, correctly deduced that the earlier discussion in Tim Sharrock's garden arose because Linnets (*C. cannabina*: *cannabis* hemp-eating) were feeding on the cannabis. Knowing that BB's Managing Editor makes regular visits to the Far East, he



wrongly assumed that he had discovered the centre of the Bedfordshire Drug Ring. Little did he know that the good doctor had been framed by the deviser of this puzzle.

4. All the birds depicted in the lower scene have tautonymic scientific names (as usual for the typical species of their genus), the specific term being the same as the generic one.

5. The odd-bird-out is Cetti's Warbler in which the genus is *Cettia*\* and the species *cetti*. Close, but no cigar.

6. An amazing 19 species in addition to the 13\* depicted: Manx Shearwater *P. puffinus*; Night Heron *N. nycticorax*; White Stork *C. ciconia*; Whooper Swan *C. cygnus*; Greylag Goose *A. anser*; Shelduck *T. tadorna*\*; Red Kite *M. milvus*; Buzzard *B. buteo*; Grey Partridge *P. perdix*\*; Quail *C. coturnix*; Spotted Crake *P. porzana*\*; Corncrake *C. crex*; Crane *G. grus*; Black-winged Stilt *H. himantopus*; Lapwing *V. vanellus*\*; Snipe *G. gallinago*; Black-tailed Godwit *L. limosa*\*; Little Auk *A. alle*; Swift *A. apus*\*; Sand Martin *R. riparia*\*; Dipper *C. cinclus*; Wren *T. troglodytes*; Thrush Nightingale *L. luscinia*; Redstart *P. phoenicurus*\*; Wheatear *O. oenanthe*; Goldcrest *R. regulus*\*; Golden Oriole *O. oriolus*; Magpie *P. pica*\*; Serin *S. serinus*; Goldfinch *C. carduelis*\*; Bullfinch *P. pyrrhula*\*; and Hawfinch *C. coccythraustes*\*.

7. Only one. Assuming that he saw a Little Bustard *T. tetrax* in Norfolk in 1968 (although it was then officially *Otis tetrax*) and the Cley Rock Sparrow *P. petronia* in 1981 (still the only British record), he would need only three species to complete the British list of tautonyms: Harlequin Duck *H. histrionicus*, Chough *P. pyrrhocrax*; and Red Grouse *L. lagopus*. All these he could have seen within a few hours yesterday (as I write). He would have flown there and back to avoid the long drive.

8. Eagle Owl *B. bubo*. All British sightings for over a hundred years are regarded as relating to escapes.

9. Islay, where the three outstanding species were to be seen at the end of October 1987.

10. Because, after seeing the aforementioned Harlequin (not recorded in Norfolk for 40 years) and Chough (which probably nested on Norwich Cathedral over 600 years ago, if their appearance in the early 14th-century Holkham Bible Picture Book and other East Anglian illustrated manuscripts can be taken as corroborative evidence), he completed the set with fine views of Red Grouse, which, despite its appearance on the tea-towel of *Birds of the Norfolk Broads*, is the only one of these 38 species which has never been recorded in Norfolk. Which is why the Grouse is Famous.

Nobody solved the whole of Bryan Bland's puzzle. The prizes of the three bottles of *The Famous Grouse* Scotch whisky have been awarded to the three entrants who got closest to complete solution: Ray Hobbs of 24 Cromwell Road, Lancaster; Neil Pinder of 33 Park Avenue East, Keyworth, Nottinghamshire; and G. Glombek of 22 Fawconer Road, Kingsclere, Newbury, Berkshire.

**Winners of free subscriptions** From the large number of replies to our 'Readership survey' (*Brit. Birds* 80 (October): xiv), which are currently being analysed, three were drawn at random. The winners of the free one-year subscriptions to *British Birds* are George B. Brown, Farm View, Baker's Lane, Black Notley, Braintree, Essex CM7 8LG; Simon Clayton, 15 Melcombe Road, Benfleet, Essex SS7 5NB; and Laurens Steyn, De Maroc 1, 2291 J W Wateringen, The Netherlands.

**International Neotropical Bird Society** During the 3rd Neotropical Ornithology Congress, held in Cali, Colombia, from 30th November to 4th December 1987, the participants made a formal step towards establishing an 'International Neotropical Bird Society', with its own scientific journal, *Omitologia Neotropical*. The first issue is planned for the end of 1989. Papers are welcomed in Spanish, English or Portuguese. The membership fee will include the subscription to the journal. The following editors have been appointed: Humberto Alvarez-López (Colombia), David C. Oren (Brazil), Mario Ramos (Mexico), F. Gary Stiles (Costa Rica), Raymond Mcneil (Canada), François Vuilleumier (USA), Alexander Cruz (USA), and Karl-L. Schuchmann (Federal Republic of Germany). All persons interested in Neotropical ornithology are welcome to join the society. For further information please contact Karl-L. Schuchmann, Dept of Ornithology, Zool. Research Institute and Museum A. Koenig, Adenauerallee 150-164, D-5300 Bonn 1, FRG. Non-European residents may contact Mario Ramos, INIREB, Apartado Postal 219, San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, 29299 Mexico.

**Raptor Research Meeting** The Raptor Research Foundation is holding its annual meeting during 26th-29th October 1988, in St Paul, Minnesota, USA. It will be preceded, during 24th-25th, by a special international symposium on medicine, surgery, and diagnostic procedures relating to wild and captive birds of prey, complementary to one held at Oxford University in 1980. For further details, please write to Dr Patrick T. Redig, Raptor Research and Rehabilitation Program, College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Minnesota, St Paul, MN 55108, USA.

**Birdwatcher's Guides** A new series of books, masterminded by David Fisher, Chris Harbard, Bernard Mercer and Richard Porter, aims to provide information needed by the travelling birdwatcher—what can be seen, and exactly where to see it. The first in the series covers Nepal and is written by Carol Inskipp. Others will follow in due course on Morocco, India, the Netherlands, and other prime birdwatching countries. All, as they become available, will be obtainable through British BirdShop.

**'Birdwatching with Bill Oddie'** This new book provides 'a practical guide to better birding'. The advice is sound, being based on Bill Oddie's years of experience as an ordinary birdwatcher, but is written with all the enthusiasm and humour that we have come to expect of him. Orders through British BirdShop (pages xvii & xviii) will help *British Birds*.

**Exclusive 'British Birds' ties** Ties bearing BB's Red Grouse emblem can be ordered through British Birdshop. They will be available in four colours (dark blue, brown, green and maroon), and each bears a single Red Grouse emblem in white. Place your orders now, using the order form on pages xvii & xviii. We shall be obtaining a limited number, depending upon demand, so please order quickly to ensure that you get yours.

**'BWP' Special Offer** We have just learnt from Oxford University Press that the price of *all* volumes is now £75 each. The exclusive offer to 'BB' subscribers is now even even better value.

**New books in British BirdShop** The following books are added this month:

Génsbøl *Birds of Prey of Britain and Europe, North Africa and the Middle East*

Holden, Sharrock & Burn *The RSPB Book of British Birds* Revised edition

Oddie *Birdwatching with Bill Oddie*

Tulloch *Bobby Tulloch's Shetland*

Special reduced offers are still available for (1) *BWP*, (2) *The Birds of Africa*, (3) *Crows of the World*, and (4) *The Frontiers of Bird Identification*.

These can be obtained POST FREE through British BirdShop. Please use the order forms on pages xvii and xviii.

## Requests

**Colour-ringed Dotterels** In 1987, over 300 breeding Dotterels *Charadrius morinellus* and their chicks were ringed in Scotland. This represents a large proportion of the breeding population and doubles the previous number ever ringed in Britain. The majority were also individually colour-marked, using up to four colour-rings (including above the knee). This offers a unique opportunity to study the migration of the Scottish population through Britain (and farther afield). Would anyone seeing Dotterels this spring (and in future migration seasons) please note:

- (a) site, date and number of individuals;
- (b) how many were checked for rings;
- (c) the colours of any rings seen, which leg they were on and whether they were above or below the knee.

All reports will be acknowledged. Please send details to Rik Smith, 36 Dubford Crescent, Bridge of Don, Aberdeen AB2 8FT.

[It is only in exceptional circumstances that we publish individual requests of this nature, since there are hundreds of colour-marking schemes in operation (see *Brit. Birds* 80: 23). In this instance, however, the special appeal of this attractive, scarce species and its habit of appearing in flocks, often on traditional passage-sites, make it likely that *British Birds* readers can make a real contribution to this study. Eds]

**Records from North Rona and Sula Sgeir** For inclusion in a checklist currently being compiled by the NCC, any unpublished records of migrants or breeding birds are requested. These should be sent to Stuart Benn, Nature Conservancy Council, 17 Rubislaw Terrace, Aberdeen AB1 1XE.

**Bad photographs** In 'Mystery photographs' we like to include good photographs of difficult species. For our competitions at conferences, however, and for use in our 'Monthly marathon' competition, we need prints of those photographs which photographers might otherwise throw away—the bird that turned its head just as the shutter opened, or that out-of-focus 'just like a misty day' fuzzy picture. Anything which you can spare will be helpful for our use. Please send your 'duds' to Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

## Reviews

**Highlight the Wild: the art of the Reid Henrys.** By Bruce Henry. Palaquin Publishing, Hartley Wintney, 1986. 103 pages; 40 colour plates; 66 black-and-white plates. £20.00.

This unusual book by Bruce Henry can be recommended for its richness of illustration and the interest of its story of a family of wildlife artists. The senior member, the author's father, G. M. Henry, is best known for *A Guide to the Birds of Ceylon* (1955). This seminal work, based on observations made during 35 years on the staff of the Colombo Museum, was admirably and fully illustrated in colour, monochrome and line. The background to this, his magnum opus, is fully described. The talent of the father was passed on to his sons, Bruce and David, through genes and inspired teaching.

David Reid Henry, who died in 1977 aged only 58, was probably the best-known and finest draughtsman of the three, and there are many splendid examples of a wide range of his work, although none of his extraordinarily fine line-drawings. An excellent collection of these can be found in Greenway's *Extinct and Vanishing Birds of the World* (1958).

George Henry stressed the importance of field observations and sketching from life and the many examples by all three are a particularly attractive feature of *Highlight the Wild*. George was a fine illustrator, and studies of plants, spiders and iridescent beetles show something of his wide interest in all living things. David was principally a bird painter, with a remarkable ability to paint meticulous plumage details without losing the general character and form of the bird. Many young bird artists could study his approach to feather texture with advantage, eschewing the slick detail of lesser, but more fashionable artists. He was also one of the best bird-feet artists in the business.

Bruce Henry's work shows more interest in the landscapes in which wildlife is placed, in scale (or even left out altogether). He skilfully adds pastel to the range of media used by the trio.

In two of the six chapters, 'The artists at work' and 'The making of a picture', Bruce gives us invaluable insight into how they went about the business of picture making, sometimes in great and helpful detail. The last chapter, 'The art of the Reid Henrys', is written by Donald Watson, who assesses their work with sympathy and the understanding of a fellow practitioner. Considering the wealth of illustrations, including 40 full-page colour plates, this book is very good value.

ROBERT GILLMOR

**A Field Guide to Photographing Birds in Britain and Western Europe.** By Mike Hill and Gordon Langsbury. Collins, London, 1987. 256 pages; 100 colour plates; 15 black-and-white plates; 3 maps. £12.95.

One of the most infuriating things about reviewing this book was finding that any nice, juicy points that could be commented upon unfavourably were usually answered most adequately farther on.

In fact, I have to admit that at first I did not take the book seriously, but perhaps I was distracted by the funny pictures of men doing improbable things in hides. At some stage, every bird photographer gets the idea that some unbelievably elaborate hide will produce the goods, but, believe me, the 'Law of diminishing returns' applies, so keep hides simple!

Only half of the book is devoted to the art and practice of photographing birds, and, all in all, it is a pretty competent effort. It is very well produced, interesting and lucidly written, while managing to cover most subjects adequately. I do not use the word 'adequately' in a derogatory sense, but only to indicate that, in the 137 pages devoted to techniques, it would be impossible to deal with every subject in depth. This book is particularly suited to the person starting to photograph birds seriously, who requires simple guidance on the right equipment to buy and how to use it.

Throughout the text, it is obvious that the authors are primarily photographers who use long lenses, with or without a hide. Consequently, some areas are not well covered, and this is more obvious from the photographs than from the text. The worst example is the chapter entitled 'The use of the flash'; the text solemnly relates the pitfalls to avoid, while some of the supposedly glowing examples then fall straight in. On page 92 there is a typical picture of a Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* supposedly illustrating the 'Synchro-sunlight technique', but with the darkest sunlit background I have ever seen, while, on the facing page, a Little Owl *Athene noctua* casts the heaviest shadow imaginable.

In the same chapter, several pages are devoted to 'Open flash' and 'Photography of small birds in flight', but no results from these methods are shown. I feel that the authors should have included pictures taken by other photographers to illustrate these points. I also have to comment that all the flash pictures bar one have been taken on a Nikon F3 with dedicated flash and, although typical of the current state of the art, they do not illustrate the points raised in the text.

The second half of the book is a gazetteer of where to go in Europe to photograph birds. Unfortunately, *British Birds* has not asked me to visit every site to check on the validity of the information, but, of the places that I know, such as Scotland, Shetland, the Pyrénées, Varanger fjord, Lapland and Sweden, the information is correct, and this will hopefully stimulate others to visit all these wonderful wild places.

Perhaps I might be accused of being old-fashioned, but I would have liked the authors to have shown some examples of the superb black-and-white pictures for which Britons are justly famed. As it is, all the illustrations of monochrome work are taken from colour slides, or merely depicted as contact-print-sized shots in the 'Basic techniques' section.

Despite these criticisms, this is an excellent book, well written and informative, full of hard-won advice, with many superb photographs, and is a volume which I would have been happy to find in my Christmas stocking.

DON SMITH

**British Bird Songs and Calls.** Compiled and edited by Ron Kettle. The British Library National Sound Archive, London, 1987. Two cassettes. £13.99.

Almost every birdwatcher wants to have a set of bird-song and bird-call recordings, for reference purposes. The comprehensive *A Field Guide to the Bird Songs of Britain and Europe* by Sture Palmér and Jeffery Boswall, which consists of 15 discs or 16 cassettes, now costs around £100 (usual price £105, but £95 to *British Birds* readers through British BirdShop). This is widely owned, but is either more complete or more expensive than some people require or wish to spend.

*British Bird Songs and Calls* covers, in just two cassettes, 'over 100 of the species most likely to be heard in Britain today.' It is beautifully presented, in a solid, card container, and with a 28-page cassette-sized booklet.

The species are arranged in approximate Voous sequence (families according to Voous, but some flexibility among the species). Thus, it will be easy for most birdwatchers to find the bird that they want, and closely related species are close together on the tapes. The running time (1 hour 47 minutes) allows an average of just over one minute per species. Except in a very few instances, each species (which is announced clearly with its English name) is represented by its song or songs and call or calls. The accompanying leaflet gives from two to half a dozen or more lines of useful comment, often naming some (though not all) of the species which can be heard in the background, together with the county, month and year of the recording, and the name of the recordist. Almost all the recordings were made in Britain. The notes are often useful for identification (e.g. Blackcap 'Song, with cleanly articulated clear flute-like notes in all too short a tune of exquisite beauty . . . Alarm call—hard "taks".'; Garden Warbler 'The rich, bubbling, breathless song (longer than Blackcap's normal song) . . . Alarm calls, similar to Blackcap but less hard.').

The quality of the recordings is consistently excellent. Indeed, the only criticism that I can make is that in a few cases (e.g. Willow Warbler) the bird was obviously so close to the microphone, with its song so loud and clear, that a slightly false impression is given of the volume of this species' 'sweet cadence, lipping down the scale', as it is described in the notes. It comes to something, however, when a reviewer's only criticism is that something is too good.

What about the choice of species? With only 110 species included (there are around 250 species which can reasonably be classed as common or well-known British birds, likely to be seen within a birdwatcher's first couple of years), it is bound to be difficult for a compiler to choose what to include and what to omit (everyone would have their own ideas on the ideal selection). When a set of recordings is collected mainly for identification purposes, however, it does seem a pity that there is no Marsh Warbler to compare with Reed Warbler; no Firecrest to compare with Goldcrest; and no Spotted Flycatcher (how often does one hear that rather weak, short song from an impossible-to-observe individual high within the leafy canopy). To make room for these, and others, I personally would have omitted Great Crested Grebe, Grey Heron and Avocet (surely, seldom identified purely by voice). I am, however, quibbling perhaps, for this is an excellent selection, with many first-rate comparisons. Above all, the choice of recordings themselves is first rate; the songs and calls are clear; and the average of one minute per species is exactly right for the purpose to which these two tapes are most likely to be put. If you have not already got a comprehensive set of bird recordings, I can strongly recommend these two cassettes.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

**Shorebirds in Australia.** By Brett Lane; colour illustrations by Jeff Davies. Nelson, Melbourne, 1987. 187 pages; 16 colour plates; 27 black-and-white plates; numerous maps. A\$49.95.

A massive amount of work by 700 observers, organised through the Royal Australian Ornithologists Union, has been drawn together in this clearly laid-out book. All species recorded in Australia are included, but the emphasis has been placed on the distribution and abundance of shorebirds on the coast and particularly the non-breeding populations. This is no mean task in a country of 7.68 million square kilometres.

Chapters cover distribution by site, feeding behaviour and ecology, migration and movements, species accounts, regional accounts, the future, and an excellent bibliography. The book is an important contribution to the rapidly expanding knowledge of shorebird numbers, distribution and movements in the northeast Asian/Australasian flyway.

The identification notes in the text are brief, but helpful; the illustrations are rather variable, some good, but others slightly oversimplified, such as the female Red-capped Dotterel *Charadrius ruficapillus*. British birdwatchers are, however, not likely to use this as a field guide, since the format is too large. They will find in it masses of information on where to see the mouth-watering species that any trip needs. It tells where 160,000 Great Knots *Calidris tenuirostris*, 30,000 Oriental Plovers *Charadrius veredus* or Little Curlews *Numenius minutus* have occurred. As a book to browse through, and plan that holiday, it has great value and relevance. It is well worth getting and reading.

TONY PRATER

**The New Environmental Age.** By Max Nicholson. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987. 232 pages; 63 black-and-white plates. £15.00.

Max Nicholson, who was Senior Editor of *British Birds* from 1951 to 1959, is an ornithologist of whom all readers of *British Birds* can feel proud. He founded the BTO in 1933: as he says in this book, 'That was where I came in.' His delight in birds has been sublimated in a life of public service, whose main aim has been to promote a view of life in which Man works with Nature. He is an enthusiastic environmentalist who stalks the corridors of power. Anything he writes is worth reading.

In *The New Environmental Age*, he endeavours 'to further the understanding' of what makes environmentalism 'tick'. He does this by discussing the origins and history of environmental conservation. Throughout his book, he emphasises both the psychological origin of conservation and its need for a scientific basis: 'conservationists are among the most up-to-date groups in our culture but they may also be among the most atavistic'. He says, 'Our cause is great and it has enlisted great people'. He pays tribute to the pioneers of conservation, to W. H. Hudson, as well as to Theodore Roosevelt. His thumbnail sketch of his friend and mentor, Sir Julian Huxley, is particularly illuminating. He believes that the environmental movement has thrived on its untidy diversity; it needs both 'polarisers' and 'integrators'.

Much of the book consists of a diatribe against the environmentally blind, the intelligent people who not only know nothing about the environmental problems of the age but 'don't want to know', people who won't listen to warnings. He asks, 'What is the nature and cause of this perversity? How can it be corrected or cured, short of locking up those afflicted in secure homes for the environmentally blind?' He is particularly critical of politicians, civil servants, educationalists, the business world and the Churches. His criticism of the Churches is only partly valid: he seems to be unaware of the long-standing and constructive debate on environmental issues within the World Council of Churches and in its numerous publications. All this invective is great fun—just as one begins to feel that the writing of countless committee minutes has reduced the message he wants to put over, out comes a pithy aphorism of dazzling aptness. Max Nicholson sees the need to integrate conservation with all human activities. He says that he is an integrator himself, but how much his book will help the process is debatable. The danger of condemning whole groups of people is that you discourage the growing number of conservationists within the condemned groups. That can be unprofitable.

Max Nicholson asks whether the environmental movement 'is a reality or a figment of the imagination'. Clearly, he believes that the New Environmental Age has already arrived, although he admits that much has yet to be done. He sees hope in the new information-technologies and, above all, in the attitudes of young men and women. His hopefulness and encouragement are timely. He ends his book with 11 guidelines for the future; they are the summation of his experience and life's work. NORMAN MOORE

**Nature Photography Yearbook 1987-88: animals, plants, landscapes.** Edited by Fritz Pölking. Fountain Press, Tolworth, 1988. 120 pages; 92 colour plates. £19.95.

A total of 92, mostly full-page, colour photographs, all beautifully reproduced, is included in this state-of-the-art collection. It includes birds, mammals, insects, other animals, plants, and natural beauty such as rock formations, waves, fallen leaves and the Aurora Borealis. It is an excellent mixture of portraits and action shots, and good judgment on the part of those who selected the photographs is reflected in the relatively few at-the-nest shots all being photographed from some distance away, so that the habitat is also well illustrated. The work of over 50 photographers from 19 countries is represented, but more than half are from four: the Federal Republic of Germany (over 20%), the United Kingdom, Finland and the USA. The text (in eight languages, including English) consists of extended captions, with full photographic details and also a little about each photographer. This book will be purchased by those who want a permanent record of the work of some of today's best wildlife photographers, and by those who will revel in the marvellous images which they have produced. J. T. R. SHARROCK

**Identification Guide to North American Passerines: a compendium of information on identifying, ageing, and sexing passerines in the hand.** By Peter Pyle, Steve N. G. Howell, Robert P. Yunick and David F. DeSante. Illustrations by Steve N. G. Howell. Slate Creek Press, Bolinas, 1987. 278 pages; 480 line-drawings. Paperback \$19.50.

When the *Identification Guide to European Passerines* by Lars Svensson was published, it was greeted with enthusiasm and relief. I say relief because passerine in-the-hand identification had previously been piecemeal and scattered through the literature. Now, belatedly, North America has its own guide. The *Identification Guide to North American Passerines* was inspired by Svensson and follows closely the European guide's format. It sets out in-the-hand criteria for the identification, ageing and sexing of virtually all passerine species which regularly breed in North America—276 species plus 20 well-defined subspecies. The species are presented systematically. A short family summary, giving number of species and family characteristics (and for difficult groups a summary, table or formulae of identification characters), is followed by concise individual species accounts under headings: species, molt, skull, age, sex, and references. Main criteria used are the extent and timing of moults, skull ossification, wing-formulae, tail and outer primary shapes, measurements, feather contrasts and wear, and plumage variations. For brevity, abbreviations are extensively used. Familiarisation with the very full 28-page introduction is essential for correct use of the guide. Measurement and wing-formula techniques, skull pneumatization, moult and its terminology, feather structure, shape and wear, breeding characteristics and the format of the guide are all discussed there. A glossary and three blank pages for notes are useful features at the end of the guide.

The guide is an excellent addition to the identification literature. But there are some disappointing features: the opportunity to standardise with European ringing techniques has been missed (e.g. continued use of the less scientifically rigorous natural curvature wing measurement); the rather misleading term 'wing-tip' is used instead of the self-explanatory 'primary projection'; and figures have been labelled unsystematically (e.g. 'Hatch Year' is the left-hand feather in some figures but the right-hand one in others). I picked out a number of minor orthographical errors and some more fundamental ones: the bill shapes of Common and Hoary Redpoll are transposed in figs. 215 & 216; in the same figures, longest undertail-covert patterns are assigned correctly, but labelled 'uppertail covert'; Northern and Loggerhead Shrikes' culmen measurements are given correctly in the text, but reversed in fig. 99; and Willoughby (1986) has been omitted from the list of references. Has a measurement been omitted from the Traill's wing formula entry in the *Empidonax* flycatchers chart? And should it not be made clear that 'Traill's' is a generic term for two very closely related flycatchers, Alder and Willow? Nevertheless, the guide is still valuable, even for this side of the Atlantic. The recent spate of passerine vagrants should prompt every ringer in western Britain to own one, and it would be a sensible purchase for any serious European ringer. For the field man, it is no substitute for the current field guides, but is a most useful adjunct with some very helpful identification summaries.

NICK RIDDIFORD

**The Slater Field Guide to Australian Birds.** By Peter Slater, Pat Slater and Raoul Slater. Rigby, Dee Why West, 1986. 343 pages; 157 colour plates. Paperback A\$29.95.

Australia offers fantastic birding for far-travelling, adventurous 'Poms', and now there is an excellent, comprehensive field-guide which will fit literally into the back pocket of your jeans or shorts. During two years in Australia, I found Peter Slater's pioneering two-volume *A Field Guide to Australian Birds* had become rather outdated, and most Australian birders were using Pizzey's *A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*. This new guide by the Slater family will compete for, and probably take over, the top spot for field usage.

The text and the plates are on facing pages, a major advantage for any field-guide. This has been achieved, despite the book's dimensions of 11cm × 21cm, by using a small typeface, and, even with a small outline of Australia depicting range alongside each text,

the descriptive content is accurate, not too brief and certainly adequate for normal identifications. The text is less detailed than in Pizzey's guide, but markedly better than in *The Birds of Australia: a book of identification* by Simpson & Day (*Brit. Birds* 79: 220).

With few exceptions, mostly Australian rarities such as phalaropes and wagtails, the colour plates are excellent, accurately depicting detail as well as capturing jizz, and including sex and age differences, and geographical variations. On a few plates, yellow, orange, red and rufous have printed rather luridly, but colour representation is mostly very good. In addition to the colour plates, there are four double-page black-and-white plates and one single-page one. Those of shearwaters and petrels and of *Sterna* terns are useful, but those depicting flying wildfowl, flying raptors and flying waders would surely have been much more use in colour.

The thorny taxonomic problems of lumping and splitting and varying vernacular names are particularly prevalent in Australia, and are widely reflected in this book. Listers and twitchers will be exasperated: fortunately, I seem to have gained four species and lost four. Streaked Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* on one plate becomes Zitting Cisticola on the next, while Providence Petrel *Pterodroma solandri* in the text and colour plate becomes Solander's Petrel on the black-and-white plate, without cross-reference. More surprising is the inclusion of Rusty-tailed Warbler *Gerygone ruficauda*, to which I can find no reference as a species or as a race in any of my four other Australian bird books.

Perhaps the brief introduction that precedes the main text should have included bird topography diagrams and a glossary: the former would have explained 'bullseyes' on the underwings of raptors while the latter might have thrown light on the usage of the colloquialism 'thickheads' for whistlers, shrike-thrushes and their allies.

I consider this new field-guide to be the best there is, and would heartily recommend anyone to make a trip to Australia to put it to the test.

NICK DYMOND

**Birds, Bogs and Forestry.** By D. A. Stroud, T. M. Reed, M. W. Pienkowski and R. A. Lindsay. Nature Conservancy Council, Peterborough. 1987. 121 pages; 26 colour photographs; 25 text figures; 9 tables. £10.00.

The battle for the bogs of Caithness and Sutherland has been widely reported, but the launch of this report last summer came like an *Evocet* in the war of words. Explanation of the political context in which the report appeared may thus help to highlight the implications of its contents.

On the one hand, national conservation bodies are united in their opposition to afforestation of the northern peatlands. On the other, Highland development agencies and some private-sector foresters argue that the nation needs more timber, and that bogs are as good a place as any for growing softwoods. At stake is the future of the Flow Country—a vast expanse of sphagnum hummocks, pools and channels which provides habitat for a rich variety of waders and other birds.

While the debate over the future of the Flows has grumbled on, thousands of hectares of prime bird sites have gone under Fountain Forestry Ltd's high-tech ploughs. An alien fuzz of pine and spruce saplings now sprouts beside trenches in an otherwise treeless landscape.

Publication of this report provoked some bitter verbal skirmishes. Part of the blame for this must rest squarely with the Nature Conservancy Council itself. In a classic PR blunder, the report, which has a bearing on future land-use in the northernmost part of the British mainland, was launched 950 km away, in London. No NCC staff were available for comment anywhere north of the Border. Incredibly, this snub to the Scots appears to have resulted from decisions made at the NCC's Scottish headquarters.

Amidst the howls of protest from bodies such as the Highlands and Islands Development Board, only the Forestry Commission inadvertently added a touch of humour. The FC's delicately named in-house paper, *The Slasher*, referred to the publication as 'Birds, Boys and Forestry'.

Despite all the political fuss which greeted its publication, the report does not itself recommend specific conservation measures for the northern peatlands. The major part presents the findings of bird-survey work carried out by the NCC between 1979 and 1986.



Together with data from recent RSPB studies, this is the most extensive account yet published of the peatlands' unusual suite of birds. Numerous maps showing the distribution of key bird species, habitat features and forest locations complement the text, while tables and bar-charts illustrate bird densities and set them in an international context. This clear presentation makes the report a useful source of summarised data for quick reference.

Many Scottish ornithologists now regret that they did not draw attention to the riches of the bogs many years ago. I can only hope that a great many birders will now read this report, visit the peatlands, then tell their friends at home and abroad. The future of two-thirds of the EEC's Greenshanks could depend on it.

KENNETH TAYLOR

## News and comment

*Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett*

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

**The Flows give and take** The Scottish Office announced in January 1988 that 40,000 ha of the Flow Country in Caithness and Sutherland should be given over to conifer forests (see *Brit. Birds* 81: 83 for earlier comments). At the same time, the Government has, however, agreed to declare some 175,000 ha as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, just under half the total area of the Flows. That such naive tactics have been adopted should surprise none of us. It must be disheartening for those who have worked so hard to save this unique area: to have to give in to one decision as they gratefully accept another. As the RSPB Scottish Director said, 'The proof of the pudding will be where the further 40,000 hectares of new conifer forests will go.' The measure represents an interim response to the Nature Conservancy Council's recommendations. Let us hope that future statements indicate further commitments to conservation of the Flows.

**'The Bullbird'** This is the name of a quarterly review of bird observations made in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is a newsletter-style publication, and six issues have been produced to date. This region of North America is the closest to Britain and Ireland and the migratory pattern there may be of interest to those monitoring movements of vagrants over here. Current subscription rates are C\$12.00 per year, and enquiries should

be sent to Bruce Mactavish, 37 Waterford Bridge Road, St John's, Newfoundland A1E 1C5, Canada. Bullbird, incidentally, is the local name for the Little Auk *Alle alle*.

**ICBP move** After eight years of 'temporary' accommodation in two and a half 'portakabins' on Cambridge University land, the International Council for Bird Preservation will move this spring into The Mount, in Girton, less than 4 km from their present address. To celebrate the purchase of its new world headquarters, the ICBP held a gala dinner at which it announced the launch of a three-year project to identify the World's most important sites for preserving biological diversity and also an appeal for £250,000 to recoup the cost of the building and necessary renovations. The gala dinner and donations have raised £60,000 so far. Donations in cash or kind will put more money into bird conservation; contact ICBP at 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL.

**Wader grant** Congratulations to Dr Nicholas Davidson of the Nature Conservancy Council, Peterborough, who has received a 1987 Travelling Fellowship worth £1,219 from the British Ecological Society. Dr Davidson will undertake a study of the life-cycles of shorebirds in Arctic Canada.

**Black-hooded Antwren rediscovered** *World Birdwatch* (winter 1987 issue) has reported that, on 7th September 1987,

Fernando and Cacilda Cavalho of the Rio de Janeiro Birdwatchers' Club observed a bird they could not identify in a forest in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. On 24th September, Fernando Cavalho and J. Fernando Pacheco returned and found the birds again: a pair of Black-hooded Antwrens *Myrmotherula erythronotos*, last reliably seen in the second half of the 19th century. The species is one of a group, endemic to the Atlantic forests of south-eastern Brazil, which has been feared extinct owing to forest destruction around Rio de Janeiro. The antwrens were later mist-netted, photographed and released, and tape recordings were made of the male's song and female's call.

**Young Ornithologists of the Year** The winners of this annual competition, run by the Young Ornithologists' Club and sponsored by *British Birds*, were presented with their prizes by the Director General of the RSPB, Ian Prestt, at The Lodge on 5th January. As is traditional, the winners then spent the remainder of the day birdwatching

with the two judges: the YOC's National Organiser, Peter Holden, and *BB*'s Managing Editor, Dr Tim Sharrock (plate 104).

**Giant Pied-billed Grebe extinct** After several months at Lake Atitlán, Guatemala, Dr Laurie Hunter began to suspect that there were no Giant Pied-billed Grebes *Podilymbus gigas* present. The species is flightless and endemic to Lake Atitlán. All pied-billed sightings were thought to be of the common Pied-billed Grebe *P. podiceps*, and all subsequent data—sonagram frequencies, egg dimensions, bill measurements and body weights—collected at Atitlán did not differ significantly from those of the smaller species. Some interesting questions arise from this discovery. When did the giant species disappear? When did the common species first appear at Lake Atitlán, and did it hybridise with the Giant Pied-billed Grebe? Studies of the mitochondrial DNA content of the many samples taken from captured birds may answer some questions, but others will forever remain a mystery.



104. YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS OF THE YEAR. Left to right, Oscar Campbell (Intermediate Winner), Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (judge), Guy Thompson (second in Senior Section), Paul Salaman (Senior Winner) and Peter Holden (judge) (*RSPB & C. H. Gomersall*)

**R & M Conference 1988** The 20th BTO Ringing and Migration Conference was held at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, during 8th-10th January. Martin Jones opened with a talk on the birds of the Madeiran Archipelago. The range of species there is relatively limited, but there are remarkable seabird populations, and some of the island races of familiar garden species were interesting.

Lukas Jenni, head of the Swiss ringing scheme, gave two presentations; the first on mass winter roosts of Bramblings *Fringilla montifringilla*, and the second an overview of Swiss ringing. Former estimates of the numbers of Bramblings visiting some mass roosts were revised downwards, to a mere 1,000,000 or so.

An interesting technique which the Swiss used for catching migrants in the Egyptian deserts involved taking 'habitat' with them, in the form of bushes strapped to the top of a *Land Rover*. When set up in the middle of nowhere, these bushes attracted up to 100 migrants per day.

Martin Kelsey compared populations of Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris* breeding in England with those wintering in Zambia. The proportion of its time that this species spends singing at both ends of its migration route is remarkable, as is the site fidelity of certain wintering Palearctic migrants.

Stephen Baillie urged ringers to take part in the 'Constant Effort Scheme', which is now beginning to bear fruit. This scheme, whereby ringing effort within sites is standardised, provides an important backup for other BTO surveys, and will make general ringing more scientifically useful.

'How to beat the heat of January' saw David Holmes following Nearctic migrants to their South American wintering grounds. Interestingly, some species requiring relatively large woods in which to breed were found wintering only in small woodland plots.

Continuing the North American theme, a Saturday night workshop on the identification of Nearctic landbird migrants which have occurred, or are likely to occur, in Europe was well attended, providing interest until well past midnight. Many British ringers will now be in a better position, should they be lucky enough to be faced with an American wood-warbler in their mist-net.

Dave Okill survived the 'deathspot' of Sunday morning, reputation intact, and

managed to stimulate the bleary survivors of Saturday night with a talk on ringing 'rain-geese', Red-throated Divers *Gavia stellata*. Gone are the days when this slot could be guaranteed to be the worst of the conference.

The *British Birds* mystery photographs competition provided the usual entertainment, with the five photographs being correctly identified by only three of the 98 entrants: Ian Hunter, Clive McKay and Dr Moss Taylor, the last named being successful in the draw for the bottle of champagne. (MB)

**Deutsche Ornithologen-Gesellschaft** The 100th anniversary meeting of the German Ornithological Society will take place in Bonn from 25th September (arrival) to 1st October 1988 (departure). There will be excursions on 2nd and 3rd October. A members' meeting will be held on 30th September.

Members of the DO-G have several international links. Accordingly, foreign speakers have been invited, aided by a generous grant from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. Lectures will be given in plenary sessions, and in a number of three-hour symposia which will run in parallel. Each symposium will include up to six papers. Under the general topics Zoogeography, Systematics and Behavioural Ecology, the following items are planned: Orientation and navigation; Ecology of birds of prey; Annual periodicity and hormonal control; Energy budgeting and thermoregulation; Nature conservation, especially of endangered species; Problems in speciation of tropical bird species; bioacoustics; Ecology of marine birds; Telemetry; Functional anatomy; and Paleontology. In addition, places for about 100 posters will be available. (Contributed by Dr Goetz Rheinwald)

**Computer gremlins** BB's new word-processing package includes a spelling checker. Unfortunately, the program's dictionary is rather limited; the wretched machine would convert all birdwatchers to biographers at the touch of a button, and the West Paralytic List Committee is surpassed only by the Dartboard Warbler *Sylvia undata*.

**Yemen reports** *Sandgrouse* 9 (now available: price £7.00 from OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL) is wholly devoted to the findings of the Ornithological

Society of the Middle East's 1985 Expedition to North Yemen. The principal contents are a series of papers on the endemic species studied during the Expedition, and a full, annotated checklist of the birds seen—which also includes full references back to earlier records and, in effect, becomes the most up-to-date checklist available for North Yemen. This issue is an important contribution to modern Arabian ornithology. A separate Expedition report, 'Birds in the Yemen Arab Republic', will be available shortly: more details in due course.

**'Bioacoustics'** The first issue of this new international journal of animal sound and its recording is due to be published in early 1988. *Bioacoustics* hopes to attract papers and articles that might otherwise be lost amongst many different journals. It plans to cover topics such as animal sound communication, wildlife sound recording techniques and equipment, recording expeditions and other projects, and, since it is published in association with the National Sound Archive, it will also provide information about wildlife sound archives. The first issue will contain a variety of papers, including two on bird subjects—acoustic signalling of the Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus* and incomplete song strophes of the Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*. There will also be a review of the first bird sound compact discs, one from France and two from Germany. The German CDs contain recordings that were recorded digitally. There is a special rate for individual subscriptions and anyone interested should contact the publishers, AB Academic Publishers, PO Box 97, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire HP4 2PX.

**Djibouti III** *Sandgrouse* 9 includes a paper by Richard Porter and Steen Christensen on observed raptor migration during the 1985 North Yemen Expedition—which coincided with the discovery in Djibouti of a major migration crossing point at the Bab-el-Mandeb strait by Geoff and Hilary Welch and their colleagues. The indefatigable Djibouti team have been at it again: from 3rd October to 9th November 1987, the area was under observation as a major part of the third Djibouti visit. Full details will be published in due time, but the preliminary report we have been sent underlines the importance of this migration route: no fewer than 246,478 raptors were counted. By far

the most numerous species were Steppe Buzzard *Buteo buteo vulpinus* (98,339 plus 29,853 unidentified buzzards), peaking during the first ten days of October, and Steppe Eagle *Aquila rapax nipalensis* (76,586 plus 27,992 unidentified *Aquila* eagles), peaking in the last third of November. The Steppe Eagle total is the highest ever recorded, spring or autumn, anywhere in the Middle East.

**Basking sharks** The huge (up to 9 m), harmless (plankton-eating) basking shark *Cetorhinus maximus* may be at risk from overfishing (for liver-oil for cosmetics, fins for human consumption, and sport). If your birdwatching takes you to the coast, you can help by reporting every sighting (on a postcard) to the Marine Conservation Society, 4 Gloucester Road, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire.

**New BOU Secretary** The administrative office of the British Ornithologists' Union has now moved from the Zoological Society of London in Regent's Park, to within the British Museum (Natural History) Sub-department of Ornithology, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP. The many friends which Gwen Bonham has made over the years, when she was a member of staff of the BTO, will be delighted to hear that she has now taken up the post of Secretary to the BOU. Good luck in the new job. Gwen!

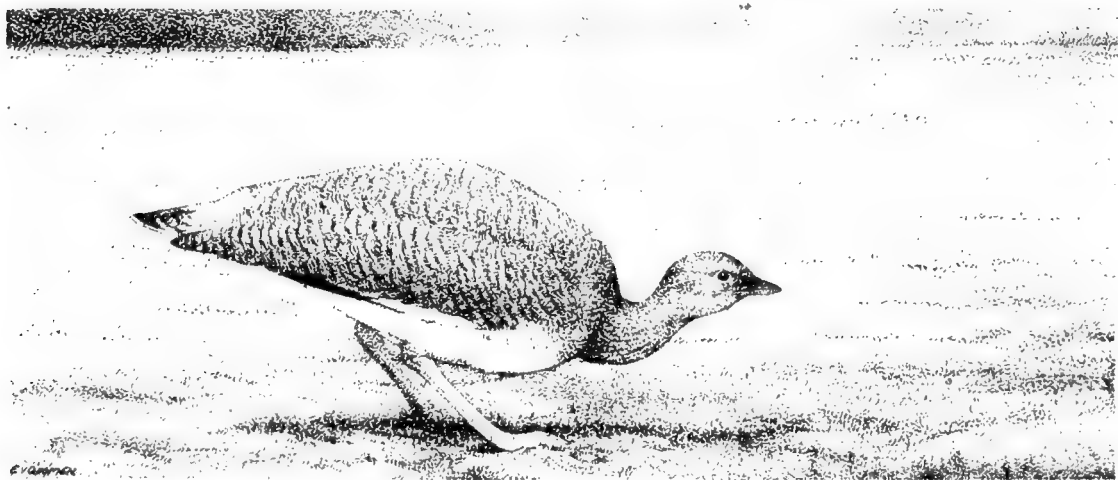
**A new gull?** Kathleen Barrett has sent us a cutting from *The Guardian* for 5th January 1988, which reported that 'hundreds of birdwatchers flocked to Liverpool yesterday to see the small rosse's gull . . .' She wondered whether this was a misprint for rozzers's, and, if so, did it wear a helmet? No comments, please!

**Wisdom acquired** Finding new facts, following additional investigations, *after* having submitted a typescript to *BB*, Dr Ian Newton commented wryly: 'The secret of all research is knowing when to stop!'

**ID consultant needed** Ronald Baker and Mike Heckler have both pointed out to us a photograph in *The Daily Telegraph* for 28th December 1987 captioned 'A Christmas Day swimmer joins the ducks on the Serpentine in Hyde Park'. The intrepid gentleman in question is surrounded by 30 unconcerned Canada Geese and one Coot, but no ducks.

# December reports

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*Ian Dawson and Keith Allsopp*

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Unless otherwise stated, dates refer to December 1987

*Cold anticyclonic weather dominated the first half of the month, but persistent cloud cover kept overnight temperatures above freezing. Winds were light, coming from north to southeasterly directions. From 15th, the temperature rose, and warm, settled westerly weather covered Britain and Ireland as the high pressure declined. The year ended with several days of heavy rain and strong winds.*

## The Little B . . .

In a most unremarkable month for birds, the appearance of an immature male **Little Bustard** *Tetrax tetrax* in the Burton area north of Christchurch (Dorset) on 30th came as a complete surprise. The locals managed to pin it down the following day, and New Year's Day saw one of the biggest-ever turnouts for what amounted to Britain's first twitchable example. The reply of a local who asked what the bird was called—'That's not very nice, is it?'—unfortunately summed up the bird's behaviour for the majority of those present; and although there were sporadic sightings for a few days, only the birders lucky enough to be there on 1st January had any sort of decent view.

## Divers to herons

Divers were reported as being 'less numerous than usual' in Cumbria, a comment which seemingly applied to the rest of Britain and Ireland, though a flock of more than 200 **Red-throated Divers** *Gavia stellata* off Minsmere (Suffolk) on 22nd was notable. On the same day, there were over 100 **Great Crested Grebes** *Podiceps cristatus* on the sea

off Southwold (Suffolk). Five widely scattered inland **Black-throated Divers** *G. arctica* were reported, while the only inland **Great Northern Diver** *G. immer* was on Staines Reservoir (Surrey) in mid month. In the light of these records, the report of a **White-billed Diver** *G. adamsii* on Audenshaw Reservoirs (Greater Manchester) on



the morning of 8th is all the more remarkable. There were only about ten inland **Red-necked Grebes** *P. grisegena*, and one shared Kenfig Pool (Mid Glamorgan) with the returned **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps*.

The faithful **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* at Stodmarsh (Kent) continued to come in to roost in the afternoons.

### Wildfowl

High counts of **Whooper Swans** *Cygnus cygnus* included 465 on the Loch of Harray (Orkney) on 11th, 230 at The Hirsell (Borders) on 20th, and more than 500 at the Ouse Washes (Norfolk/Cambridgeshire). A **Bewick's Swan** *C. columbianus* of the nominate race, known as 'Whistling Swan', reappeared on the Wexford Slobs (Co. Wexford) in mid month. Another returning individual was the adult **Red-breasted Goose** *Branta ruficollis*, found on 7th and remaining in the Cley/Salthouse/Blakeney/Langham area (Norfolk) into 1988. A **Brent Goose** *B. bernicla* of the race *nigricans* was in the same flock of Brents, while others were seen at Lynn Point (Norfolk) on 17th, and in Dun-

drum Bay (Co. Down) on 31st. Good numbers of **Bean Geese** *Anser fabalis* were perhaps a little surprising given the mild weather, but more than 400 were in the traditional area at Buckenham (Norfolk), 28 at Slimbridge (Gloucestershire), and nine on the South Slob, Wexford, along with odd ones elsewhere. **White-fronted Geese** *A. albifrons*, too, were widely reported from non-traditional haunts in England, including 34 on the Kent Estuary (Cumbria) from 20th-22nd.

A drake **Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra* of the race *americana* was found in Gosford Bay (Lothian) on the last day of the year, while also of transatlantic origin were **Surf Scoters** *M. perspicillata* with three in St Bride's Bay (Dyfed) and a female at Laytown (Co. Meath). There were single **Teals** *Anas crecca* of the Nearctic race *carolinensis* in England, Ireland and Scotland, only two **American Wigeons** *A. americana*, and only six **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris*, of which half were together on Hawkridge Reservoir (Somerset). A lost **Garganey** *Anas querquedula* remained at Belfast (Co. Down), and the **Falcated Duck** *A. falcata* reappeared at Thrapston (Northamptonshire). Some ten **Red-crested Pochards** *Netta rufina* and half a dozen **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca* were below par for recent winters, though **Smews** *Mergus albellus* were widespread, with up to 25 at Dungeness (Kent) and 15 at Wraysbury (Berkshire).

### Birds of prey

There were five reports of **Red Kites** *Milvus milvus* flying over eastern England between 12th and 21st, and another in Dovedale (Derbyshire) on 30th. The only **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* reported were





105. Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Merseyside, December 1987 (Steve Young)

two in the Butley/Chillesford area (Suffolk) from at least 13th, and one at Slapton (Devon) on 6th; while female **Goshawks** *Accipiter gentilis* created havoc at Holme (Norfolk) on 22nd and Hemingford Grey (Cambridgeshire) on 24th.

#### Waders

Four **Long-billed Dowitchers** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* involved individuals at Anthorn (Cumbria) to 7th, Branton Burrows (Devon) to at least 5th, the Gann Estuary (Dyfed) from 12th, and Belfast Lough all month. A plover showing all the features of **Pacific Golden** *Pluvialis fulva*, except for the

underwing (white rather than smoky), originally seen briefly in November, was refound at Chew Valley Lake (Avon) on 26th, moving to Marksbury Plain (Somerset). Several observers remarked on the scarcity of **Jack Snipe** *Limnocyptes minimus* this winter. A **Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus* wintering at Stenness (Orkney) was the first for those islands. A **Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* was seen off Southwold on 22nd.

#### Gulls, terns and auks

About a dozen **Ring-billed Gulls** *Larus delawarensis* (plate 105), with only one Irish report, perhaps indicates a turnaround in numbers. Some 30 each of **Glaucous** *L. hyperboreus* and **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucoideus* mainly involved regular wintering individuals, and the scarcity of the former was particularly remarked upon. Three Iceland Gulls roosting together at Ogston Reservoir (Derbyshire) on 20th was worthy of note, as was the return of the individual of the Nearctic race *kumlieni* to Banff (Grampian). The total of 30 or so **Mediterranean Gulls** *L. melanocephalus* again involved many winter regulars, in addition to two dozen at Copt Point (Kent). A **Sabine's Gull** *L. sabini* was seen at Woolwich (Greater London) on 7th.

One of the few remarkable records during the period was a **Lesser Crested Tern** *Sterna bengalensis* at Dawlish (Devon) on 19th, and two days later at Cardiff (South Glamorgan). At the other end of Wales, the **Forster's Tern** *S. forsteri* reappeared at Penmon, Anglesey (Gwynedd), late in the month.

There were still large numbers of **Little Auks** *Alle alle* in the North Sea, mainly early in the month, though with a more northerly bias than in November: the highest count was of 1,000 on the sea off Tynninghame (Lothian) on 13th. Several were picked up inland in the first few days. A **Black Guillemot** *Cepphus grylle* at Yellowcraig (Lothian) on 13th was unusual.







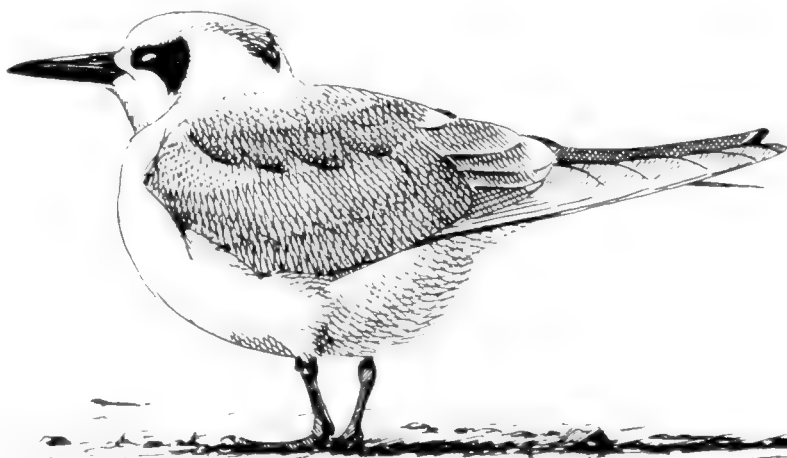
### Larks to thrushes

An unseasonal **Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* spent about ten days on the coastal path at Aldborough (Humberside) mid month. Very few **Shore Larks** *Eremophila alpestris* were scattered down the British east coast from Tynninghame to Seasalter (Kent). There were late **Swallows** *Hirundo rustica* and **House Martins** *Delichon urbica* in Cumbria and Cambridgeshire respectively, while a **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* stayed at Sandwich Bay (Kent)

for a week, and a male **Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* remained at Hurst Reservoir (Derbyshire) to 13th. Vying for star billing with the Little Bustard, but unseen by most, was a **Dusky Thrush** *Turdus naumanni* on the island of Skomer (Dyfed) from 4th to 6th.

### Warblers to buntings

An *Acrocephalus* warbler which remained at Welches Dam (Cambridgeshire), from the end of November to 7th, may well have been a Blyth's Reed Warbler *A. dumetorum*, but





we shall probably never know unless some wing-formula-revealing photographs are unearthed. There was a scattering of **Chiffchaffs** *Phylloscopus collybita* showing characters of the eastern race *tristis* and two tardy **Pallas's Warblers** *P. proregulus*, at Rustington (West Sussex) on 5th and 6th, and at Felixstowe (Suffolk) on 23rd.

A **Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris* of the nominate, northern race remained at Binscarth (Orkney) to at least Christmas Eve. There were only half a dozen reports of **Great Grey Shrikes** *Lanius excubitor*; 'very low numbers' of **Bramblings** *Fringilla monti-*

*fringilla*, with, for example, just two singles in Avon; and virtually no **Siskins** *Carduelis spinus* in Northern Ireland. There were, however, more coastal flocks of **Twites** *C. flavirostris* than usual in Cumbria. There were also good numbers of **Lapland Buntings** *Calcarius lapponicus*, with flocks in excess of 20 at three sites in Lothian and Borders, as well as in Norfolk, Suffolk and Kent, and **Snow Buntings** *Plectrophenax nivalis*, especially on both sides of the Irish Sea. A **Song Sparrow** *Zonotrichia melodia* reported at Point of Ayr (Clwyd) on 18th could not unfortunately be relocated the following day.



## Recent reports

*Compiled by Mark Boyd*

This summary covers the period 15th February to 20th March 1988

**White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* St Ives (Cornwall), 15th-27th February; Filey (North Yorkshire), 10th-14th March.

**Garganey** *Anas querquedula* Port Meadow (Oxfordshire), from 15th March; Welney (Norfolk), from 17th March.

**Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* Corbet Lough (Co. Down), to at least 12th March.

**Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* Holme (Norfolk), at least four on 18th March; Downham Market (Norfolk), 19th March; Cockley Cley (Norfolk), 19th March; Holkham (Norfolk), 19th March; Gayton (Norfolk), 19th March; Covenham Reservoir (Lincolnshire), 19th March; Hemington (Northamptonshire), 19th March; Gressenhall (Norfolk), 20th March; Bradwell Marsh (Essex), 20th March.

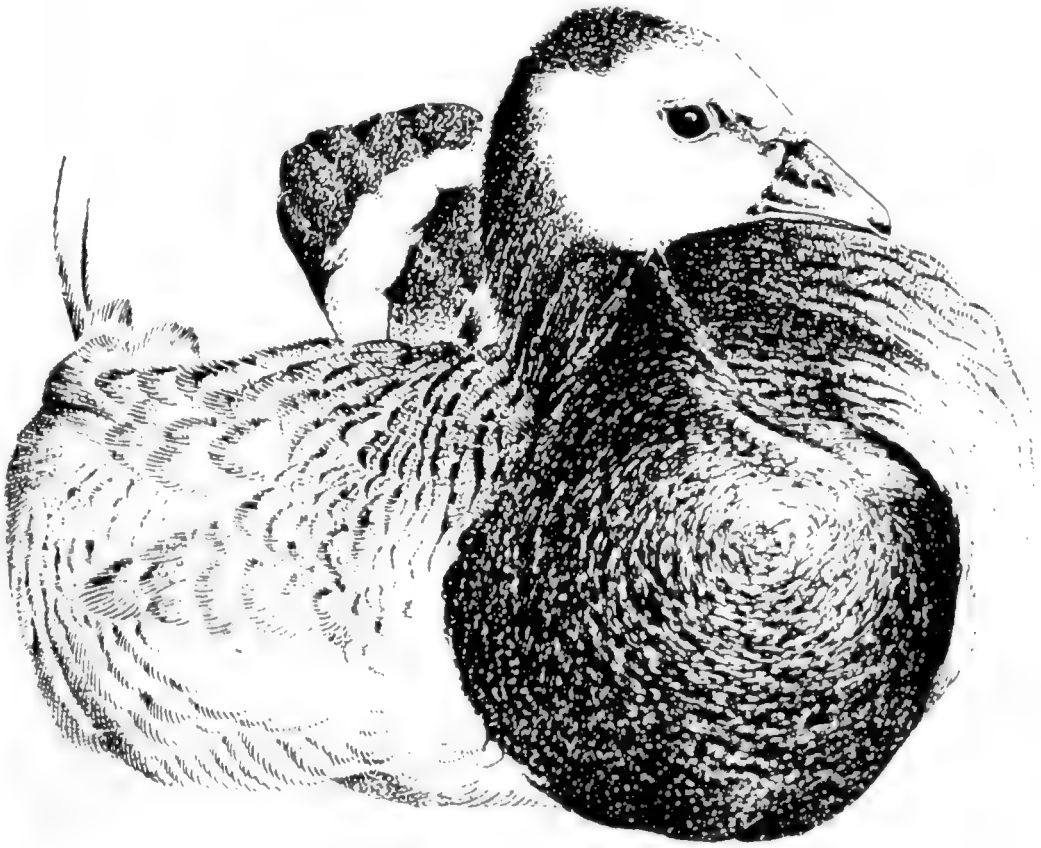
**Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus* Holkham, 27th February-6th March.

**Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* Galway Docks (Co. Galway), 28th February to at least 13th March; Lizard Peninsula (Cornwall), 8th-11th March; Plym Estuary (Devon), from 13th March; Sunderland (Tyne & Wear), 16th March.

**Alpine Swift** *Apus melba* Sandwell Valley Nature Centre (West Midlands), 16th-20th March, when flown to Portugal courtesy of *British Airways*; Yeovil (Somerset), 17th March; Spurn (Humberside), 20th March.

**Waxwing** *Bombicilla garrulus* Broughton Aspley (Leicestershire), 20th-28th February.

**Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* Ashby de la Zouch (Leicestershire), to at least 28th February.



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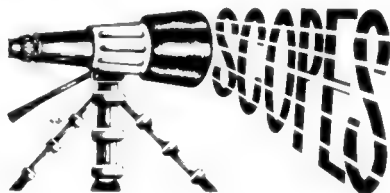
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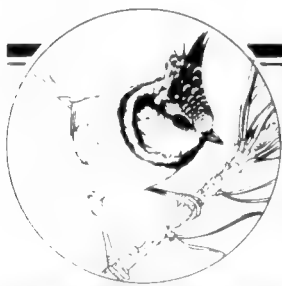
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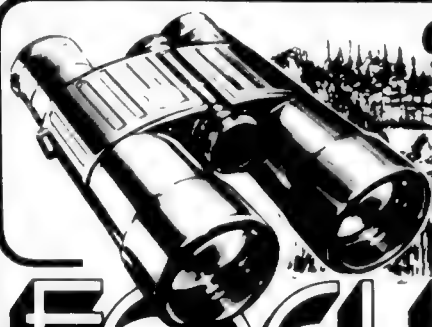


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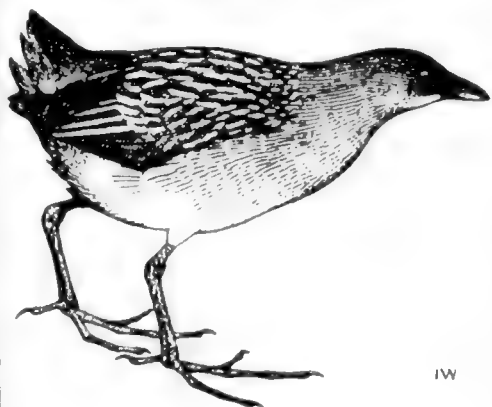
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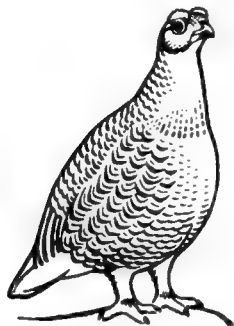
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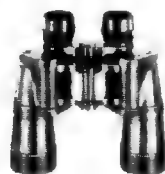
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344  
320  
56  
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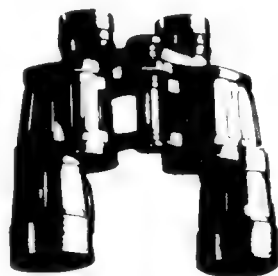
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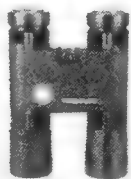
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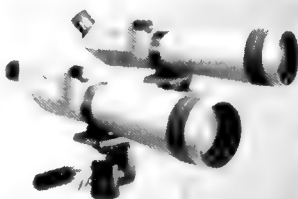
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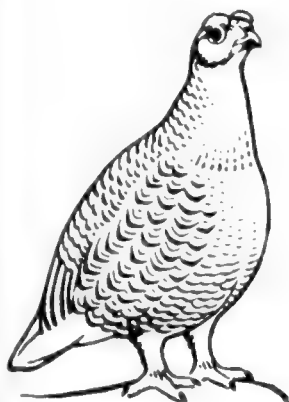
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# British Birds

VOLUME 81 NUMBER 5 MAY 1988



## Readership survey

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**T**he pull-out questionnaire which was included in the October 1987 issue was aimed mainly at providing us with information so that we can (1) adjust the balance of the contents of the journal to suit the wishes of our readers, and (2) provide our advertisers (and potential advertisers) with information about the sort of people who are *BB* subscribers. We know, however, that many readers (especially the 1,249 who returned questionnaires) will be interested in a summary of the results.

In our sample, only 0.4% of readers have subscribed since the 1930s, and 1.8% since the 1940s. On the other hand, one-third have subscribed for three years or less; half have subscribed for six years or less; and two-thirds for nine years or less. These figures are hardly surprising, considering the enormous growth in our circulation in recent years, but we were surprised to realise how few of today's *BB* readers will remember back to the days when the journal was published by H. F. & G. Witherby, and, indeed, the high proportion (57%) who did not start subscribing to *BB* until after the magazine left Macmillan and became independent, in August 1980.

We strongly support the excellent work done by the RSPB, and were glad to find that 83.3% of *BB* subscribers also do so, by being members.

Only 44.0%, however, are members of the BTO; although we did not check to see, we suspect that the majority will be from among the more long-standing of *BB* subscribers, since we have always regarded *BB* as a stepping-stone between casual RSPB membership and local society involvement in birdwatching for fun, and the more serious and dedicated survey and census work of the BTO. We were surprised to find that less than half of the BTO members in our sample also subscribed to the Trust's journal, *Bird Study*.

Over half (55.5%) of *BB* subscribers are aged 18/40 years; a further 36% are 41-64; a mere 5% over 64; and 3.5% under 18.

In the next 12 months, 8% of *BB* subscribers plan to buy a camera, 12% will buy a new pair of binoculars, 12% will buy a telescope, 17% will buy a tripod, 27% will buy a birdwatching coat or jacket, and 38% will buy boots, shoes or wellingtons for birdwatching. The trend towards owning a tripod as well as a telescope has been shown by our regular surveys of ownership of binoculars and telescopes (*Brit. Birds* 71: 429-439; 76: 155-161; 78: 167-175; 81: 149-160). It can be assumed, however, that all birdwatchers already own binoculars, a birdwatching coat or jacket, and special footwear for birdwatching, and we know of no special trend towards increased camera ownership among birdwatchers. It is possible, therefore, to calculate replacement times for these items. On average, a *British Birds* subscriber will buy special birdwatching footwear every two or three years; a birdwatching coat or jacket every four years; a new pair of binoculars every eight years; a new telescope also every eight years; and a camera every 12 or 13 years. The extraordinarily short replacement times for these items, especially the binoculars and telescopes, reflect the constant heavy use to which *British Birds* readers subject their birdwatching equipment, and their desire always to have the most up-to-date models. While most people buy one or perhaps two pairs of binoculars in their lifetime, *British Birds* subscribers will, on average, buy six or seven. Some readers plan to spend an average of over £1,000 per year on birdwatching equipment, and most expect to spend about £300 a year.

It comes as no surprise to discover that *British Birds* readers are also book-buyers; 97% plan to buy at least one bird book this year. While the occasional subscriber intends to spend £2,500 or so on bird books in the coming 12 months, *British Birds* readers expect, on average, to spend £102 on bird books in a normal year.

*British Birds* subscribers devote an average of 109 days to birdwatching per year: more than two days per week. Over half of *BB* subscribers (55%) travel abroad birdwatching each year, spending an average of 19 days on these overseas trips. When birdwatching at home, 42% stay in guest houses, for an average of ten nights per year; 27% stay in hotels, for an average of nine nights per year; 26% camp out, for an average of 13 nights per year; and 22% stay in hostels or at bird observatories, for an average of 12 nights per year.

Subscribers who keep their copy of *British Birds* to themselves make up only 53% of those who read the magazine. Even ignoring the 3,660 copies supplied to libraries and reading circles each year, more than one-quarter

of *BB* subscribers share their copy with at least one other non-subscriber, and some copies are read by two, three, four, five or six other people (one subscriber admitted to sharing his with 15 other birdwatchers, and another with 26).

Unlike most magazines, *British Birds* does not have a short life. It is not read and thrown away, like a newspaper or a 'glossy, bookstall magazine': only 0.4% of readers treat their copy in this way, with a staggering 99.6% keeping their copy of *BB* permanently and referring to it subsequently (44% 'often'; and 55% 'occasionally').

Regarding the contents of *BB*, questionnaire respondents' favourite features were identification articles, 'Monthly reports' of bird news, the short 'Notes' on varied subjects, and the main papers (on whatever topic). A flattering 10% said that they liked all of it, and could not choose a favourite feature. The largest votes were for more space to be devoted to identification, photographs, birdwatching sites and bird behaviour.

Concerning readers' least favourite features, just over one-third (34%) said that they liked *all* the contents and could not select *any* feature as 'least favourite'. The biggest 'hates', however, were 'Seventy-five years ago . . .' and 'Personalities'. (In defence of 'Seventy-five years ago . . .', we have to point out that it usually occupies space that would otherwise be blank; and we do suggest that all those who said that they dislike it should at least read the one on page 77 in the February 1988 issue.) When it came to asking for a reduction in the space devoted to features, the most votes were for less on rare birds (especially species not recorded in Britain). Some readers pressed for *British Birds* to be restricted to articles on *British* birds, but we have stated for more than a quarter of a century that '*British Birds* publishes material dealing with original observations on the birds of the West Palearctic' (see the inside front cover of every issue), and *BB* does have subscribers in 63 countries.

A surprising number of readers requested a reduction in the number of advertising pages. As we hoped most people now realised, extra advertising means extra income, which means extra pages of papers and notes, and extra illustrations and photographs, with more of them in colour. A reader's reaction ought, therefore, to be 'Good! There's a lot of advertising in this issue', not the reverse. Seeing the comments requesting that all photographs should be in colour, we also realise that not all subscribers appreciate that the inclusion of just one colour photograph currently costs almost £700 (compared with under £30 for one in black-and-white).

We are aware that *BB* appeals to a wide variety of birdwatchers, and that what one person likes best is what another likes least. We shall, however, be taking all the detailed comments and criticism into account when planning future issues. We thank everyone who spent time completing our questionnaire.

## Acknowledgment

The analysis of the 1,249 readers' questionnaires on which this summary is based was carried out for *British Birds* by Jean Richards.

# Taxonomy of the Rock/Water Pipit superspecies *Anthus petrosus*, *spinoletta* and *rubescens*



Alan Knox

At the time of the last British checklist (BOU 1971), the Rock and Water Pipits were generally regarded as one polytypic species of Holarctic distribution, *Anthus spinoletta*. This species ranged from western Europe to eastern Siberia, across North America from Alaska to western Greenland and southwards along the Rocky Mountains. Recently, the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee, on the recommendation of its taxonomic working group, decided to treat these pipits as a superspecies composed of three species, *A. petrosus*, *A. spinoletta* and *A. rubescens*, all of which occur or have occurred in Britain and Ireland (BOURC 1986; table 1). In this paper, I shall briefly give the background to this decision.

## Geographic variation

Many of the subspecies within the original Rock/Water Pipit complex (table 1) grade into one another to some extent. This is particularly so with the forms in western Europe, where a cline runs from the longer-billed and darker '*kleinschmidtii*' (see below), through *petrosus*, to the shorter-billed and paler *littoralis* (Hall 1961). These races also vary in the extent to which they undergo a moult in late winter. In the cases of '*kleinschmidtii*' and *petrosus*, the winter plumage is largely retained and the birds are dark and heavily streaked as the breeding season approaches. A distinctive spring plumage is acquired by *littoralis*, to a degree which varies between individuals. Some *petrosus* from Ouessant, France, appear to be intermediate, and moult into *littoralis*-like spring plumage (Mayaud 1952).

Although the northern end of this cline is called *kleinschmidtii*, this form is



only poorly differentiated and arbitrarily separated from *petrosus*. Its geographic range is not clear (Vaurie 1959; Hall 1961; Williamson 1965). As with several other names given to stages in this cline, it is perhaps best synonymised (BOUTS 1956). The acceptable northwestern forms (*petrosus* and *littoralis*) differ from the remaining subspecies in being more olive-brown instead of greyish on the upperparts, especially the rump, with the underparts more extensively streaked and washed with yellow-buff, and by the outer-tail pattern being dusky rather than pure white.

Nominate *spinoletta* is more lightly streaked, and the underparts are flushed with pale pink in spring. The Middle Eastern form, *coutellii*, is smaller than nominate *spinoletta*, and more heavily streaked, with more orange tones and a warmer pink on the breast in spring. *A. s. blakistoni* is paler than either nominate *spinoletta* or *coutellii*, and less heavily streaked than the latter. More distinctive than either *coutellii* or *blakistoni*, *japonicus* is dark, with heavy spotting in autumn. The underparts in spring are sparsely marked, and washed orange-buff rather than pink. The white in the tail is more extensive, and the legs are pale.

The North American races are all similar to *japonicus*, although warmer brown in autumn, and with lighter streaking. In spring, they are greyer and darker above, with little or no streaking below. The legs are dark. The populations in western North America tend to be paler than those farther east, and may not be separable. The race in the Rocky Mountains, *alticola*, has a rich spring plumage. (Plumage notes based on Hall 1961 and Vaurie 1959.)

Table 1. The subspecies of the Rock/Water Pipit superspecies (based on Hall 1961 and Vaurie 1959)

\*Regarded here as synonym of *petrosus*

1. Conspecific under the name *A. petrosus*

2. Conspecific under the name *A. spinoletta*

3. Conspecific under the name *A. rubescens*

Subspecies	Breeding distribution
[ <i>kleinschmidtii</i> *	Faroe Islands and possibly Scottish outlying islands]
1 <i>petrosus</i>	Ireland, Britain, northwest France
1 <i>littoralis</i>	Fennoscandia and northwest Russia
2 <i>spinoletta</i>	Southern and central Europe
2 <i>coutellii</i>	Asia Minor, Caucasus and Iran
2 <i>blakistoni</i>	Central Asia
3 <i>japonicus</i>	Eastern Asia
3 <i>pacificus</i>	Western North America
3 <i>rubescens</i>	Eastern North America and western Greenland
3 <i>alticola</i>	Central and southern Rocky Mountains

Separation of 'A. rubescens' from 'A. spinoletta'

Recent work in the USSR has shown that *blakistoni* and *japonicus* live 'side by side' in Transbaykalia (Nazarenko 1978). The two forms were found to occupy different habitats, *blakistoni* inhabiting 'tundra' with few or no rocks, and *japonicus* (which was much rarer) on parts of the same 'tundra' where rocks were abundant. There was no evidence of hybridisation, and Nazarenko believed that the two populations were behaving as different species. Shirihihi & Colston (1987) have provided further references to the

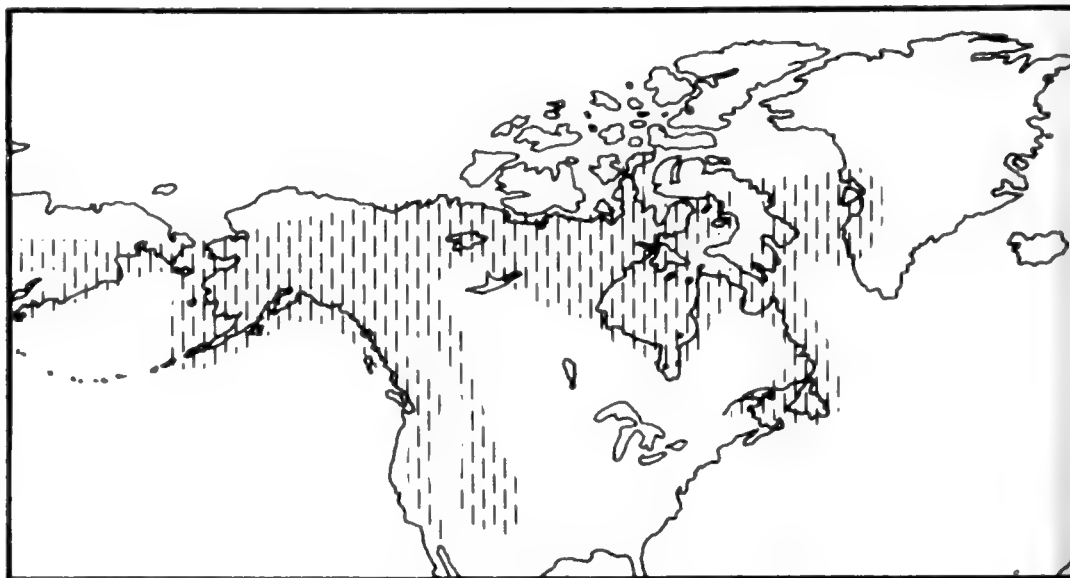


Fig. 1. Breeding distributions of Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus* (black), Water Pipit *A. spinoletta* (hatching). See Table 1 for details.

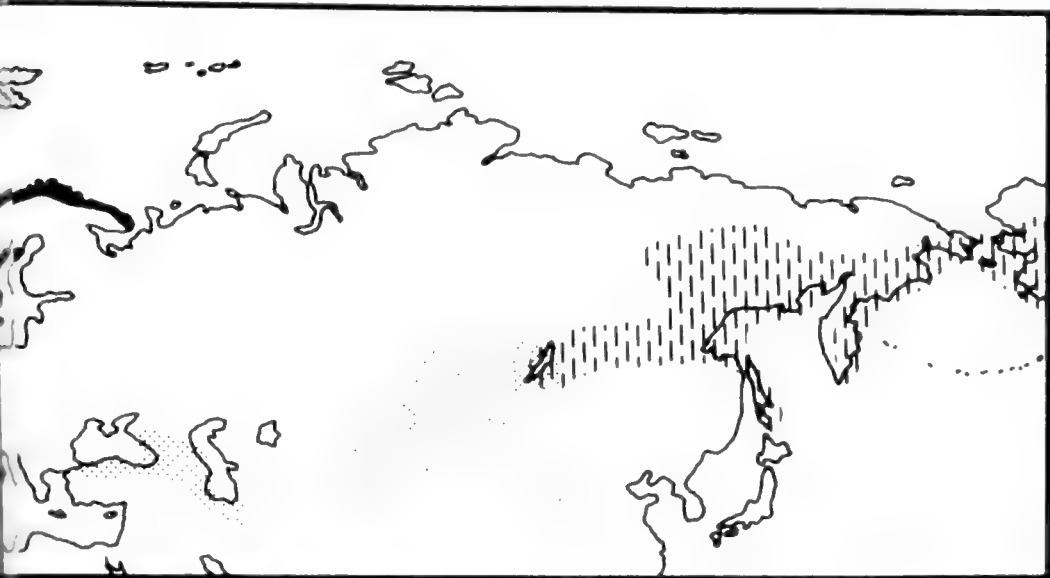
Soviet literature which confirm the differences between these taxa. Since the North American races are thought to be closely related to *japonicus*, all these forms are now best removed from *A. spinoletta* (which includes *blakistoni*), under the name *A. rubescens* (this being the oldest name within the newly separated species). Alström & Mild (in press & in prep.) consider that morphological and vocal differences alone would justify the separation of these species.

There have been four records of *A. r. rubescens* in Britain and Ireland: St Kilda in September 1910, Wexford in October 1951, Fair Isle in September 1953, and Wicklow in November 1967 (BOU 1971). Three other records, one of which predates the above, are still under consideration. Elsewhere in Europe, there have been three records of this subspecies from Helgoland (November 1851, May 1858 and September 1899), and one in Italy (November 1951) (Glutz 1985). *A. r. japonicus* is a scarce, but regular, passage migrant and winter visitor to the Middle East (Shirihai & Colston 1987; Alström & Mild in press), and there is one European record, from Italy in October 1960 (Bonfio 1962).

### Rock and Water Pipits

The original concept of *A. spinoletta* (i.e. including *A. rubescens*) comprised two distinct ecological groups of races—the *petrosus* group (*petrosus* and *littoralis*, together known as the Rock Pipits) and the *spinoletta* group (all the remaining races, known as the Water Pipits). During the breeding season, the former is largely confined to the rocky coasts of northern and western Europe, whereas the latter 'consists predominantly of inland forms occurring on tundras, barren tracks, alpine pastures, and rocky grassy slopes with or without scrub, and particularly along streams' (Vaurie 1959).

Although Rock and Water Pipits are entirely allopatric during the breeding season, they are sometimes found alongside one another in winter. Bijlsma (1977) studied *littoralis* and nominate *spinoletta* at one such



and American Pipit *A. rubescens* (vertical shading) (after Glutz 1985).  
 on of races

site in the Netherlands. He found differences in the distribution of the two forms between the available habitats, with *spinoletta* in wetter places than *littoralis*: where they occurred together, they were separated by microhabitat. It is sometimes found that conspecific subspecies differ in the habitats they utilise while on passage or in winter (e.g. Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* subspecies: Fry *et al.* 1972), but this is usually the case also with distinct species. Bijlsma found that his Rock and Water Pipits roosted in different habitats. In Britain, Water Pipits roost communally, unlike Rock Pipits (Biber 1986). Rock and Water Pipits have also shown different food and habitat requirements within Britain, *spinoletta* particularly avoiding saline environments (Gibb 1956; Johnson 1966, 1970; Biber 1986).

The main plumage differences between the groups are described above, but they are not absolute. Some *littoralis*, for example, have greyish tones on the upperparts and Königstedt & Müller (1983) reported that 'exceptional individuals [of nominate *spinoletta*] cannot be separated from *littoralis* on tail feather colouration alone.' Under these circumstances, other characters must be used as well: either plumage features, or perhaps vocalisations.

### Separation of '*A. petrosus*' from '*A. spinoletta*'

The Rock and European Water Pipits are generally quite distinctive and easy to identify. Their breeding ranges are widely separated, and they occupy very different habitats: the former coastal, the latter montane. During winter, they have different ecological requirements. There are clearly good reasons for considering them to be different species.

Allopatric breeding populations frequently cause difficulties for taxonomists: there is no direct evidence as to whether the forms would or would not successfully interbreed if they were to come into contact. The morphological and ecological differences between Rock and Water Pipits in Europe are, however, at least as pronounced as those between *A. s. blakistoni* and *A. r. japonicus*. We believe, therefore, that it is appropriate to treat the *petrosus* and *spinoletta* groups as separate species.

The BOU proposes to treat the British forms of the superspecies in the following manner:

- |                                 |                |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| <i>A. petrosus petrosus</i>     | } Rock Pipit   |
| <i>A. petrosus littoralis</i>   |                |
| <i>A. spinoletta spinoletta</i> | Water Pipit    |
| <i>A. rubescens rubescens</i>   | American Pipit |

The sequence conforms with the principles used by Voous (1977): *Anthus* is an Old World genus; the exclusively Palearctic taxa are therefore placed first, with *rubescens* following. This order also places each taxon next to its presumed nearest relative (of those on the British and Irish List).

The suggested English name for *rubescens*—American Pipit—follows earlier usage, and describes the geographic origin of the individuals which have occurred in Britain. It is not entirely satisfactory if applied to the whole species, and the alternatives of Buff-bellied Pipit and Holarctic Pipit have been suggested.

The Rock Pipits were treated as separate species by Bannerman (1953) and, more recently, by Oreel (1980) and Devillers (1980). The Middle European handbook (Glutz 1985) and Devillers (1980) treated the American Pipit as a separate species. Johnson (1970) has reviewed the identification and distribution of Rock and Water Pipits within Britain.

## Acknowledgments

This paper is based on a report that was prepared for the BOURC. I am grateful to the other members of the Committee for their comments at that stage. Through Peter Grant, G. J. Oreel provided a translation of the relevant notes to the Dutch checklist. M. G. Wilson kindly translated Nazarenko's paper. I have particularly benefited from discussions and correspondence concerning pipits with Lars Svensson and Per Alström. I. R. Bishop and Robert Hudson commented on the manuscript.

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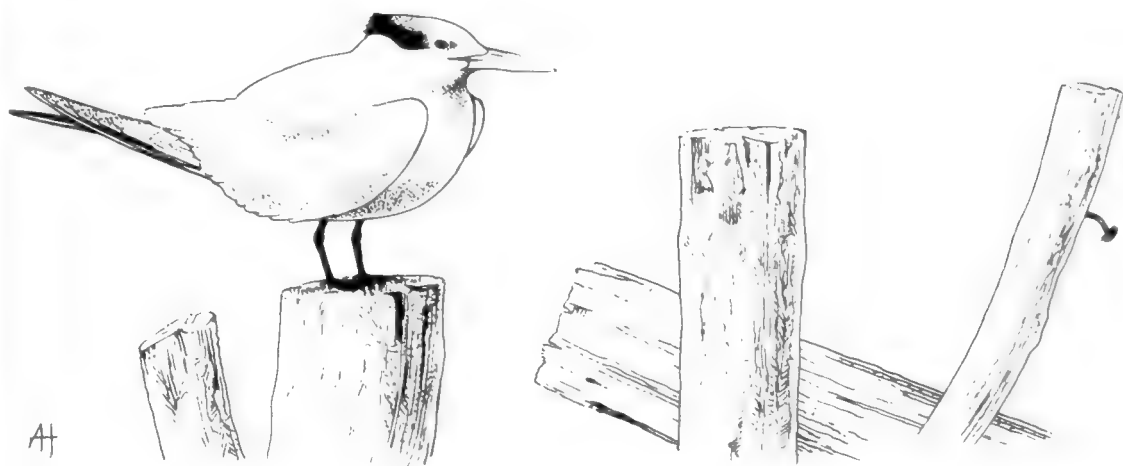
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A paper on the identification of these three species is currently in preparation by Per Alström and Krister Mild for publication in *British Birds*. EDS

## Identification of large terns



*S. J. M. Gantlett*

*Illustrated by Alan Harris*

### Part 2. Photographs

This concluding part consists solely of photographs of the seven (or eight) species concerned, and is intended to be used in conjunction with the text, maps and paintings which appeared in Part 1 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 257-276).



106. Adult Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*, Mongolia, August 1979 (Alan Kitson), showing diagnostic blackish undersides to primaries



107. Adult winter Caspian Terns *Sterna caspia*, Kenya, January 1984 (J. De Ridder). Note streaked forehead, in front of and above eye, even in full non-breeding plumage

108. Adult summer Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*, Black Sea, USSR, summer (K. A. Judin)





109. Adult summer Royal Tern *Sterna maxima*, California, USA, March 1984 (Richard E. Webster). compare underwing pattern with Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* (plate 106), but beware darkening effect of age and wear on primaries of all terns

110. Adult winter Royal Terns *Sterna maxima* with two adult winter Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis* and Laughing Gulls *Larus atricilla*, Florida, USA, October 1984 (J. B. & S. Bottomley). Note that the Royal Terns are much larger than the Sandwich Terns







111. First-summer Royal Terns *Sterna maxima*, California, USA, March 1984 (Richard E. Webster)



112. First-winter Royal Tern *Sterna maxima*, Florida, USA, December 1983 (Richard Coomber). At this age, tern bills may not yet be fully grown

113. Adult winter Royal Tern *Sterna maxima*, Florida, USA, December 1983 (Richard Coomber). Note difference in nape-feather positioning from plate 118.





114. Adult winter Crested Tern *Sterna bergii* (foreground) and adult winter Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*, Kenya, January 1984 (*Jan Mulder*). The Crested Tern shows the typical (though not always present) winter white edgings to rear crown feathers

115. Adult Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*, Namibia, South Africa, November 1982 (*David Tomlinson*). Note that this is nominate race, which has paler wings and mantle than *S. b. velox* of the Red Sea area. Interpretation of tern upperparts shade should always be treated with caution, however, owing to lighting and photographic effects. In breeding plumage, Crested Tern shows small, neat white forehead; this individual has streaks reaching to above the eye, however, and is not in full breeding plumage





116. First-year Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*, Cape of Good Hope, South Africa, November 1982 (David Tomlinson)

117. Adult winter Crested Terns *Sterna bergii* and one adult winter Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*, Kenya, January 1984 (Jan Mulder)





118. Adult summer Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* with Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis*, Banc d'Arguin, France, June 1974 (*Pierre Petit*). Originally published (*Brit. Birds* 77: 373, plate 139) as of uncertain identity, but now accepted as Lesser Crested Tern

119. Adult Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* with Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis*, Italy, August 1982 (*R. Mainardi*). Moulting into winter plumage has begun





120. Adult winter Lesser Crested Terns *Sterna bengalensis* and one adult winter Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*, Kenya, January 1984 (J. De Ridder). Note larger size and much broader wings of the Crested Tern

121. Winter Lesser Crested Terns *Sterna bengalensis*, Kenya, January 1984 (J. De Ridder)





122. Adult and first-summer Elegant Terns *Sterna elegans* and two Forster's Terns *Sterna forsteri*, California, USA, September 1980 (P. A. Doherty). The variable number of dark outer primaries is evident and some of the birds are in obvious primary moult

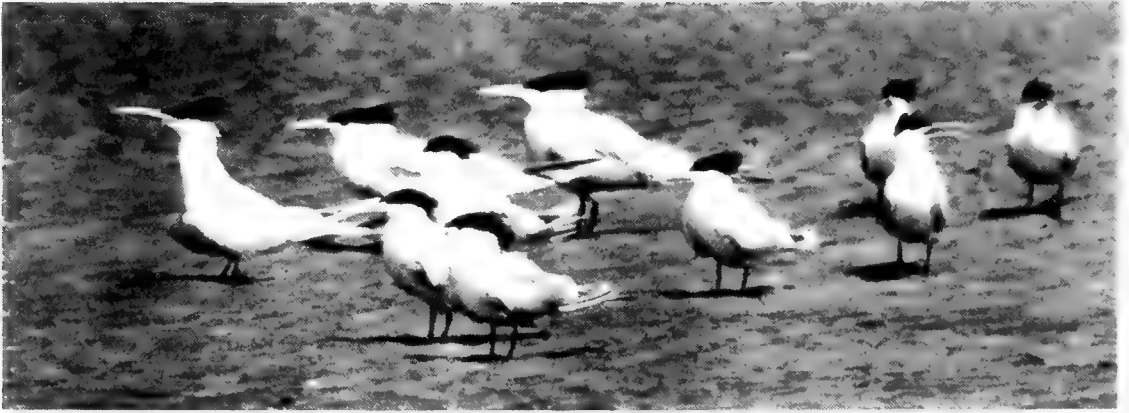


123 & 124. First-summer (left) and adult summer (right) Elegant Terns *Sterna elegans*, California, USA, August 1985 (J. A. Blincow)

125. Adult summer Elegant Terns *Sterna elegans*, California, USA, April 1984 (Richard E. Webster). Note long, thin bill, especially on individual in full profile, and 'shaggy' nape plumes







126. Elegant Terns *Sterna elegans* with two Royal Terns *Sterna maxima*, California, U.S.A., April 1984 (Richard E. Webster). Compare sizes, body bulk and bill shape



127. Adult winter Elegant Tern *Sterna elegans*, California, U.S.A., September 1986 (Jonathan Alderfer)

128. Adult summer Cayenne Terns *Sterna (sandvicensis) eurygnatha* at breeding colony, Aruba, Netherlands Antilles, June 1987 (R. van Halewijn)







129. Adult summer Cayenne Terns *Sterna (sandvicensis) eurygnatha*, Aruba, Netherlands Antilles, June 1987 (R. van Halewijn)

130. Adult winter Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*, Florida, U.S.A., October 1981 (J. B. & S. Bottomley)





**131.** First-winter Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*, Netherlands, December 1983 (Arnoud B. van den Berg). Note strikingly grey rump and tail at this age, and that photograph was taken in December, when Sandwich Tern is rarely observed in Britain

### Acknowledgments

Many photographers supplied prints or transparencies for possible use in this paper. They have already all been acknowledged by name (*Brit. Birds* 80: 275), but we should like once again to thank them for their help. Photographs not reproduced here were nevertheless very useful for reference purposes, and many are now held on file at the *British Birds* editorial office.

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## Seventy-five years ago...

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'The inclusion of Barrow's Goldeneye as a British species has recently been shown to be entirely unwarranted and this is mentioned by Mr. Millais in a footnote added while his work was "in the press." We must take exception, too, to the inclusion of Baer's Pochard, whose status as a British bird rests on the one example shot at Tring on November 5th, 1901. In these days when water-fowl from all parts of the world are kept in semi-captivity in this country it is not advisable to admit such a species on the strength of one occurrence.' (*Brit. Birds* 6: 365, May 1913)

# Mystery photographs

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**131** Last month's mystery photograph (plate 90, repeated here as plate 132) was one of the most difficult in this series. It was obviously a large raptor, either a buzzard or an eagle, but unfortunately was in silhouette, so, without any plumage details to help us, we have to rely on shape alone to identify the bird. Even for an experienced raptor-watcher, a lone bird seen in silhouette can present great problems, indeed many such birds defy identification.



With no immediately obvious features to go on, we shall have to use a process of elimination. At least with a photograph we do have a stationary image; in the field, the bird might be lost to view before we could make an appraisal of all the details.

If we examine the photograph carefully, we can see that the bird has a fairly prominent and rather broad head. The wings are fairly broad, with the hand similar in width to the arm, producing a somewhat rectangular shape. There is a slight bulge to the trailing edge of the secondaries, which in turn gives a pinched-in look to the base of the wings. The seven 'fingered' primaries are well separated. The wings are held fairly straight, not obviously held forward or kinked. The tail is slightly rounded or possibly wedge-shaped; it is just over two-thirds of the depth of the wing, making it neither long nor particularly short. In fact, there is nothing particularly striking about the shape at all, which, as we shall see, is in itself a feature.

Taking buzzards first, we can quickly eliminate Buzzard *Buteo buteo* on the grounds that the head of our bird protrudes too far and the secondary bulge produces the wrong wing shape. Both Long-legged Buzzard *B. rufinus* and Rough-legged Buzzard *B. lagopus* look long-winged and have the hand narrower than the arm, so they too are safely ruled out.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* has a strongly wedge-shaped tail, and the massive, broad wings show a jagged rear edge to the secondaries which is lacking here. Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* has rather narrow, straight-edged wings and a longer, square-tipped tail, while Bonelli's Eagle *H. fasciatus* also shows rectangular wings with a hand that is slightly narrower than the arm. The tail of Bonelli's Eagle often appears very long and is invariably square-ended. Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* is one of the most distinctively shaped of the Palearctic eagles. With a broad, markedly protruding head typical of the genus, and square-tipped wings which are both long and rather



133. Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*, India, January 1979 (Klaus Malling Olsen)

broad and usually held forwards when soaring, it can usually be identified even at great range. Both Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* and Imperial Eagle *A. heliaca* are long-winged and have ample tails. The wings of Golden Eagle are strongly pinched-in at the base, making the tail appear even longer. Imperial Eagle has a very prominent head, and adults usually show almost parallel front and rear edges to the wings, but some juveniles have longer secondaries, producing a bulge on the trailing edge. This species invariably appears large and heavily built, with a powerful flight, characters that do not come across readily from a photograph, but are usually apparent in the field.

Similar in size and shape to Imperial Eagle is Steppe/Tawny Eagle *A. rapax*. This species often shows a wedge-shaped tail and a secondary bulge, particularly on immatures. The pronounced gape of *A. r. nipalensis*, which reaches farther back below the eye than on any other Palearctic eagle, is often visible in the field. Lesser Spotted Eagle *A. pomarina* can appear almost identical in shape to Steppe Eagle, though it is much smaller and shorter-winged, as well as lacking the prominent bill and gape. Spotted Eagle *A. clanga* also shows a wedge-shaped tail, though typically this is rather short, and it also has a very prominent secondary bulge which accentuates the rather broad-winged appearance. The effects of age and moult can, however, alter the typical flight silhouette of these three species, making their shapes appear very similar at times. In particular, fresh-plumaged juvenile Spotted Eagles may have distinctly longer tails, so that a 'normal looking' tail does not necessarily rule out Spotted.

We are now faced with a choice between three species, and it is debatable whether we can progress much farther from the photograph alone. In the field, we might have gained a better impression of size and bulk, particularly if we had some recent experience of raptor-watching. We might reasonably say, however, that the bird lacks the broad-winged, short-tailed appearance of a typical Spotted Eagle, and does not look quite so massive and long-winged as would a Steppe Eagle, and that, therefore, it has to be a Lesser Spotted Eagle. If we did, we would be correct, for that is the species shown: photographed by J. Roché in Algeria in September 1979.

If we could have seen the underwing pattern, we could have been certain of the identification, for the paler underwing-coverts, uniform with the body and contrasting with the darker flight feathers (the reverse of the pattern of Spotted Eagle), are diagnostic. An immature Steppe Eagle would normally show a pale line forming a border between the underwing-coverts and the flight feathers, whilst an adult would show a uniform greyish-brown underwing without any contrast between coverts and flight feathers. An excellent summary of the identification features of these species was given recently by Klaus Malling Olsen (*Brit. Birds* 79: 329-331).

IAIN ROBERTSON



134. Mystery photograph 132. Identify the species. Answer next month

## Requests

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**Atlas of Breeding Birds of the Algarve** This year is the first of this five-year project. Offers of help will be much appreciated. Further information and record cards can be obtained from the western Algarve organiser, Mrs Glenis Vowles, Vale Bom, Odelouca, 8300 Silves, Portugal; or from the eastern Algarve organiser: Les Batty, U. E./ Biologia Marinha e Pescas, Universidade do Algarve, 8000 Faro, Portugal.

**Avian pathology and disease: register of laboratories and reference centres** The International Council for Bird Preservation is publishing the *Proceedings*, edited by J. E. Cooper, of a symposium on 'Disease and management of threatened wild bird populations' held in Canada in 1986. With growing interest in, and appreciation of, the importance of disease and wildlife conservation, it was agreed to include a register of persons and organisations working on all aspects of avian pathology and disease. The ICBP is most anxious to include all those interested in being consulted over problems relating to morbidity and mortality and to facilitate exchange of information and material between those working on avian disease. Anyone who would like to be listed in the register should please write as soon as possible for details and a questionnaire to: N. Hillgarth, Department of Zoology, South Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PS; or to J. E. Cooper, Royal College of Surgeons of England, 35/43 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2A 3PN.

**Transparencies of 1987 rarities** Anyone with high-quality colour transparencies of a 1987 rarity is asked to loan the originals to us for possible use (perhaps in colour) in the next rarities report. To be considered, transparencies must *arrive* with Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ) before 15th June. Thank you.

# Bird Photograph of the Year

Sponsored by Collins



and Christopher Helm



At the risk of boring our regular readers, we must say, yet again, that the photographic standard of this competition is amazingly high. For the judges, this is very much one of the highlights of the year, full of pleasure and enjoyment. It is extremely rewarding to see the fruits of some of the world's top bird photographers' best endeavours.

From the 103 entries, the judges' selection of 33 included all of Jacques Trouvilliez's three entries, and two transparencies from eight other photographers: Dr Kevin Carlson, Arie de Knijff, Bob Glover, Conrad Greaves, Dr Mike Hill, Huub Huneke, Richard T. Mills and Mike Wilkes. Further sifting—not an easy process—produced a short-list of 17 transparencies, from which 11 were selected for the final independent vote, which produced the following result:

- 1st 'BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR' Brent Geese *Branta bernicla* (R. Glover, Essex) (plate 137)
- 2nd Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* (Dr Kevin Carlson, Norfolk) (plate 135)
- 3rd Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* and Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* (Jacques Trouvilliez, France) (plate 136)
- 4th Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* (Arie de Knijff, Netherlands) (plate 138)
- 5th Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* at nest of Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* (Tony Hamblin, Warwickshire) (plate 139)
- 6th Rufous Bush Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes* (Dr Mike Hill, Bahrain)
- 7th Black-headed Gull (Nigel R. Jones, Hampshire)
- 8th= Jackdaws *Corvus monedula* (Mike Wilkes, Worcestershire)
- 8th= Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra* (M. J. McKavett, Merseyside)
- 10th White-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis* (Huub Huneke, Netherlands)
- 11th Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (Peter de Knijff, Netherlands)

The other six short-listed photographs were: Tufted Ducks *Aythya fuligula* and Pochards *A. ferina* (P. Munsterman), Sand Partridges *Ammoperdix heyi* (Jan A. M. Schram), Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* (R. Glover), Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* (Dennis Bright), Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* (Richard T. Mills), and Magpie *Pica pica* and Buzzard *Buteo buteo* (P. Munsterman).

Even if their entry is not mentioned here, all the photographers who submitted transparencies can be assured that there was little wrong with their work—the general standard was very high, even those not selected being comparable with the photographs reproduced here.

If we have any criticism, it is that in some cases the balance of the composition—and this is not always easy in the heat of the moment—could be improved by a little judicious masking, to bring the main subject to correct position in the frame, to avoid an out-of-focus foreground, or other embarrassing intrusions. (This can easily be done by remounting with the aid of carefully cut aluminium foil.)

It is most rewarding, too, to be able to report a continuing trend towards 'action' photography: if we considered a photograph of a bird at the nest, it was usually for this reason.



135. Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* at nest with young, Portugal, May 1987 (Kevin Carlson)(Nikon FE2, 70-210 mm Nikkor AF zoom, f/8, 1/60th, Kodachrome 64)

136. Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* and Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*, France, June 1987 (Jacques Trouwillez) (Nikon FE, 400 mm Nikkor f/5.6, Fujichrome 100)







137. BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR: Brent Geese *Branta bernicla*, Essex, January



*(Glover)* (Nikon FE, 55 mm Mikronikkor, f3.5, 1/500th, Kodachrome 25)



138. Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, Netherlands, January 1987 (Arie de Knijff) (Nikon F3 HP, 600 mm IFED Nikkor, f.5.6, Kodachrome 64)

139. Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* at nest of Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*, Warwickshire, June 1987 (A. R. Hamblin) (Olympus OM2N, 85-250 mm Zuiko zoom, f.11, 1/30th, Kodachrome 64)



This year, we have selected, by our votes, a pictorial subject as the winner. In all respects, Bob Glover's photograph (plate 137) is outstanding. The composition is superb; the Brent Geese (clearly identifiable as such in spite of the individually small images) flying into the picture, all neatly fitting into the frame. It captures perfectly the atmosphere of a crisp, sunlit January day out on the Essex saltings, ideally illustrating the winter habitat of the geese. We note with admiration that the photographer was bold enough to use a slow, but extremely fine-grain film, which has allowed both the full detail and also the considerable beauty of the scene to be recorded to greatest effect. Not only a worthy winner, but also an indication to future entrants that the judges do not have a stereotyped 'potential winner' in mind: provided it is good enough, any bird photograph—whether close-up or distant atmosphere shot—is in with a chance.

He's done it again! After his aberration last year, when he managed to win this competition, Kevin Carlson has reverted to his almost perennial second place. What consistency! So far, no-one has managed to win twice, but we can assure Kevin that this is not a deliberate policy of the judges. Although, as readers will well know, we try not to overplay the photography of birds at the nest, we all admire Kevin's nest-photographs and regard him as one of the world's supreme masters of this art. His Purple Heron (plate 135) is both a very fine photograph—in sharp focus, well captured, perfectly exposed—and at the same time is of considerable interest. We share with the photographer the activity as the parent disgorges food brought back to the nest for its young. It was with some difficulty that Kevin introduced a hide to this site, a clump of willows in 1½ m depth of water. We understand that at one point he became dangerously entangled with water lilies while swimming to the hide. It is also worth noting the good use to which a zoom lens has been put in this photograph, neatly framing the adult as it bends to feed its young.

The third-placed photograph arose from a study of the use made by Black-necked Grebes of the protection from predators provided by a colony of Black-headed Gulls. We were amused to discover that Jacques Trouvilliez was able to observe the colony by wading in a rubber suit in 1½ m depth of water, his upperparts disguised as the nest of a muskrat *Ondatra zibethicus*. He used this technique to take the fine shot of the nesting grebe with neighbouring Black-headed Gull, both of which are incubating (plate 136). While the grebe reacts vigorously to another nearby grebe, the gull remains unconcerned.

It is well known that a grebe will sometimes, when disturbed, remain partly submerged, with only its head appearing above water. Usually, it does this while tucked in against the river-bank or amongst the reeds, so this behaviour is not often seen. Still more rarely is it photographed, so we were full of admiration for Arie de Knijff's photograph of a Little Grebe (plate 138), not under a dark shadowy bank, but out in the 'open' of an ice-fringed area of unfrozen water, giving us a clear unimpeded view of this fascinating aspect of grebe behaviour. None of the judges

had seen a photograph of this before, let alone one of this quality.

Occasionally the nest-photographer will have a surprise and be able to photograph a species of bird other than the owner of the nest. This happened to Tony Hamblin while he was awaiting the return of a Turtle Dove to its nest and young. A Wren made two visits, foraging for invertebrates in the doves' nest, and on one occasion appeared to scrutinise carefully the young, actually standing on one. Unfortunately, on that occasion the Wren kept its back to the camera, but Tony none-the-less managed to obtain this interesting shot of a rather unusual event (plate 139).

Now we can look forward to next year and—we are sure—another batch of superb pictures from the world's top bird-photographers. We are most grateful to the sponsors of this competition, the publishers WILLIAM COLLINS SON & CO. LTD and CHRISTOPHER HELM PUBLISHERS LTD, whose support of *British Birds* provides the encouragement that is reflected in the rising standards which annually amaze the judges.

R. J. CHANDLER, ERIC HOSKING, J. T. R. SHARROCK and DON SMITH

## Letter

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**Are we getting our figures right?** The BTO may well tell me that it is extremely naughty of me to turn their population estimates of winter thrushes *Turdus* (by D. W. SNOW, in Lack 1986) into the rounded ratio of:

Blackbird *T. merula* 28: Song Thrush *T. philomelos* 13: Redwing *T. iliacus* 2 or more: Fieldfare *T. pilaris* 2: Mistle Thrush *T. viscivorus* 1

but, there, I've done it. As I suspected, it does not fit the count ratios of winter thrushes in five out of six of my own local studies, conducted in England from 1959 onwards.

Yes, I know that what might be termed 'specific visibility' is higher for Fieldfare and sometimes Redwing than for the other species and that 'line counts' and 'bird/day totals' can be untrustworthy measurements. Nevertheless, I am stuck with the impression—built over 44 years—that the normal descending order of winter thrush numbers (written left to right) is:

Blackbird: Redwing/Fieldfare: Song: Mistle

In the context of about 180 km of line-counts during 1950-84, my Yorkshire East Riding ratio was:

Blackbird 19: Fieldfare 14: Redwing 11: Song 2: Mistle 1

In the context of about 75 km of a similar discipline in 1986-87, my east Staffordshire ratio is:

Blackbird 18: Fieldfare 16: Mistle 3 and Song 3: Redwing 1

Only in Regent's Park, London—hardly typical winter-thrush habitat—have my counts followed the ratio of the *Wintering Atlas*, and that was 20 years ago.

The position of Song Thrush is the one that puzzles me most. The *Wintering Atlas* admits that it is 'visually less conspicuous' and 'more migratory' than Blackbird, but suggests nevertheless that 'less than a quarter' of the late-summer population emigrates from Britain, yet with the map showing clearly a major north English and Scottish evacuation. Hence the main basis of the conclusion that '6-10 million' winter in Britain and Ireland. Except in Regent's Park, I have never witnessed any mainly sustained 'summer presence' and each succeeding autumn I watch Song Thrushes 'fade away'—except perhaps from sheltered village gardens—to return no earlier than the following February, but then abruptly in a manner that suggests a real arrival (and not local redistribution). Nor have I ever convinced myself that immigrant Song Thrushes add substantially to winter numbers. I enjoy picking out the 'strange dark' and 'grey Continental' Song Thrushes in autumn falls; I *look* for them in winter, but with only rare success.

Finally, does not the Redwing number—at least in some winters—far more than 1 million? My estimate of 10, even 15 million (1981, *Birdwatching in the Seventies*) may have gone over the top, but it was made during the review of a decade's records, which included a one-day total of 150,000 on some small bits of northern Scotland on 26th October 1976. Maybe the Redwing is not as common as it used to be, but its flocks can still drown parts of our countryside: for example, 34 km of the M5's hawthorn hedges in January 1985. In the same month, Redwings clearly outnumbered all other thrushes in the village of Frocester, Gloucestershire.

As my also Scottish boss says: 'Are we getting our figures right?' and 'If not, why not?' In terms of conservation accuracy, getting Song Thrush and Redwing right is more important than chasing after the umpteenth Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*. Does anyone else worry about *Atlas* estimates?

D. I. M. WALLACE

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## Notes



**Three Great Crested Grebes building a nesting platform** On 12th November 1984, at Potteric Carr, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, my attention was drawn to three Great Crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus* collecting vegetation and arranging it on a small submerged mound which was covered by about 5 cm of water. The three grebes were easily separable: bird *A* was an adult coming back into summer plumage (probably male); *B* was an adult in winter plumage (later assumed to be a

female when *A* was seen to mount and copulate with it); and *C* was an immature. Since August, there had been only four Great Crested Grebes at Potteric Carr: *A* and *B* and their two offspring, one of which was grebe *C*. On several occasions over the previous two months, the two adults had been observed displaying for short periods. When I first noticed the building activity, *B* was doing most of the work, and at no time did *A* seem as enthusiastic as *B*. At first, bird *C* did not seem welcome, particularly by bird *A*, but both adults did not appear to want bird *C* to be too close at this stage; several times, *C* was chased from the immediate vicinity of the platform to a distance of about 6 m. If, while collecting material, the adults moved away (usually more than 6 m) from the platform, the immature, *C*, took the opportunity to move in and begin to add material itself; at one point, *C* climbed on to the platform, and sat there until chased off by *B*. As the platform progressed, both adults became more tolerant of the immature, *C*, which eventually took as much part in building activity as grebe *B*. After one short period of activity, *B* climbed on to the platform and, after some neck-stretching and shaking, began arranging material around itself. This lasted for about three minutes, during which time *C* continued to bring material. Eventually, *A* and *B* drifted out across the water and did not return. The immature, *C*, stayed around the platform for a further five minutes, but did not seem too interested once the adults had left and soon swam off to open water. The whole episode lasted for 25-30 minutes.

One month later, on 12th December 1984, I observed the two adults, *A* and *B*, displaying, platform-building and finally copulating. All this took place in the presence of the immature, *C*, which was chased off on several occasions, but persistently returned until the adults lost interest and drifted away preening.

Although grebes will, given the correct stimuli, take part in unseasonal nest-building, I can find no reference to this sort of behaviour involving immatures.

R. P. LAMBE

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Dr K. E. L. Simmons has commented as follows: 'The observations on Great Crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus* by R. P. Lambe (published above) provide an interesting example of early courtship, rather than unseasonal nest-building. Great Crested Grebes often start forming or re-forming pairs months in advance of eventual nesting (see, e.g., Simmons 1974). Part of the behaviour associated with this process involves the building of one or more mating platforms upon which soliciting and copulation occur. As with a number of other species that go through mating ceremonies well before laying (e.g. Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*), this is part of the courtship and is not functional mating (which happens later, before nesting proper). Unlike ducks, however, grebes can copulate only out of water, so they have to build a mating structure or use a "substitute" one (see Simmons 1955). It was to stress the significance of such copulatory courtship that I later coined the term "platform courtship" for activities on the mating platform and "water courtship" for the better-known and even more complex display ceremonies away from it (see also *BWP* 1: 85). Such behaviour is not uncommon during December and January, and Mr Lambe's observations now show that incipient platform courtship can occur as early as November. Incidentally, the identification of one of the grebes as a female on the basis of its role in copulation is uncertain for, as first discovered some 87 years ago (Selous 1901), this species sometimes performs reversed mounting.

'The behaviour of the immature grebe is something quite different. This bird, evidently



one of the offspring of the pair (probably the "in-chick" of *B*: see Simmons 1974) that had—as sometimes occurs—continued to associate with its parents long after the usual period of dependence, was probably stimulated to take part in platform-building by the example of the adults. Encounters with weed and other items of potential nest material can trigger in young grebes from an early age a number of responses, from carrying and depositing to performances of "weed-dances", that become functional only much later in life; soliciting among older juveniles, both before and after independence, also occurs, but in my experience copulation does not (details in Simmons 1970). Elements of both water and platform courtship can also occasionally be shown by a young grebe towards one of its parents.' EDS

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### Leucism and partial albinism in Balearic race of Manx Shearwater

Leucism and albinism have been reported for such a variety of bird species (e.g., Sage, *Brit. Birds* 56: 409-416; Gross, *Bird Banding* 36: 67-71) that lack of pigmentation can apparently be expected in any species. According to Harrison (1983, *Seabirds: an identification guide*) and the following sources, however, it has been reported for only six or seven out of the 18-20 species of shearwater *Calonectris Puffinus*, detailed descriptions

140. Partially albinistic Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* of Balearic race *mauretanicus*, Spain, May 1985 (Ed Mackrill)



being available for only four of these: Cory's *C. diomedea* (Haney, *Oriole* 49: 33-34), Great *P. gravis* (Lee & Grant, *Wilson Bull.* 98: 488-490), Sooty *P. griseus* (Stallcup, *Western Birds* 7: 113-136) and Audubon's *P. lherminieri* (Hayes & Baker, *Elepaio* 46: 32). Harris (*BWP* vol. 1, page 145) reported partial albinism in Manx Shearwater *P. puffinus*, and Mayaud (*Alauda* 3: 230-249) examined an aberrant juvenile female Manx of the Balearic race *mauretanicus* (which the present authors consider better treated as belonging to a distinct species, *P. yelkouan*: Bourne *et al.*, in press), but no plumage details are given for either record.

On 28th August 1984, PY observed at close range a very pale, leucistic shearwater off Vendée, western France; it was exactly similar in size and 'jizz' to accompanying *mauretanicus* and was, without any doubt, a fresh-plumaged juvenile of that subspecies. Ten days later, in the same area, a similar bird, probably the same one, was observed twice. The upperparts appeared an almost uniform pale grey, the primaries being a very pale silvery-grey, and the secondaries slightly darker. The underparts were apparently completely white, although the precise colour of the underwing, obviously very pale, was not determined for certain. There was a sharp demarcation between the grey upperparts and the white underparts, and the general impression was of a bird looking at least as pale as an adult Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*. The bill was of a paler brown than generally found on this subspecies, and the feet were flesh-coloured.

In May 1985, a partially albinistic Manx Shearwater of the race *mauretanicus* was photographed by EJM off Menorca, in the Balearic Islands, Spain. It showed well-developed pure white patches on the central lesser coverts on both wings, extending marginally onto the median and greater coverts on at least the left wing, and two small pure white spots on the crown (plate 140).

Such abnormalities are certainly of rare occurrence, the above records being the only ones we have obtained out of the many thousand *mauretanicus* each of us has carefully observed. Nor do they seem commoner in other shearwater species: fewer than a dozen albinistic individuals out of several thousand Cory's observed by Haney; and only one partial albino out of 3,095 Audubon's Shearwaters observed by Hayes & Baker. According to Lee & Grant, the more pronounced feather abrasion induced by the lack of pigmentation could explain the scarcity of albinism/leucism records in shearwaters, through a reduced potential for survival. In order to avoid possible identification pitfalls with shearwaters in general, however, seawatchers should remember that they can be faced with such puzzling individuals.

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**Unusual escape flight of Grey Heron** On 29th April 1981, at Corris, Gwynedd, I watched a pair of Ravens *Corvus corax* mobbing a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*. At each attack, the heron folded its wings, turned upside down and dropped a couple of metres (in the manner of a Raven

itself). The Ravens mobbed as a pair and attacked three times; each time, the heron turned upside down, then flapped furiously to regain height. After 200 m, the Ravens left the heron in peace. A Buzzard *Buteo buteo* which flew overhead was ignored by the Ravens. I have not seen this escape flight used by Grey Herons before or since.

ROGER Q. SKEEN

*Braich Goch Hotel, Corris, near Machynlleth SY20 9RD*

### **Diet of White-tailed Eagle in Buckinghamshire in winter 1983/84**

An immature White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* that wintered in the Brill area of Buckinghamshire from mid December 1983 to the end of February 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 539) was watched by over 4,000 birdwatchers for hundreds of man-hours, but relatively little active feeding was observed. In an attempt to assess this individual's diet, requests for information were placed in the *Buckinghamshire Bird Club Bulletin* (February 1984) and in *BTO News* (May 1984). The results of follow-up 'detective work' (to distinguish fact from fiction as rumours of strange prey items spread from local villagers to interested birdwatchers) are summarised below.

The eagle fed on a number of live, sometimes moribund, prey and also scavenged widely. It was seen to take at least five rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, three as carrion and two as sick myxomatosis victims, two brown hares *Lepus capensis*, and a dog fox *Vulpes vulpes*. It flew over and frightened a medium-sized domestic dog; and swooped low over a muntjac *Muntiacus reevesi* flushed by beaters, crossing a line of guns in the process without mishap.

On numerous occasions, the eagle was seen to feed on rearing and calving cake provided for the local livestock; these foods are composed very largely of barley and maize, but include herring meal, molasses, dried poultry and soya. It was repeatedly mobbed by crows (*Corvidae*) and Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* in particular, but with time became tolerant, though it was watched stripping a gull carcass while standing in floodwater. At a nearby lake frequented more often later in its stay, the eagle was frequently mobbed by Canada Geese *Branta canadensis* and especially by Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea*, and was observed eating dead fish (unidentified) and Coots *Fulica atra*. The interests of the eagle were daily looked after by the local keeper, who, ironically, had his binoculars stolen from his van before the bird's arrival and watched it through the telescopic sights of his rifle for long periods.

Records were contributed by Mrs S. Cowdy, Mrs R. Hall, Mrs B. M. Hulbert, C. Humphrey, R. S. R. Fitter, J. Knight, R. A. Morgan, P. Morris, Lady Newall, and J. Bibby Agriculture Ltd of Banbury, Oxfordshire.

DAVID GLUE

*Populations Section, British Trust for Ornithology, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR*

**Barn Owls nesting in wells in Portugal** In early March 1985, at Aretortas, Almadena, in the Algarve area of southern Portugal, a pair of Barn Owls *Tyto alba* was disturbed while roosting down an old well. By

the end of March, the pair had moved about 130 m to another old well, which was passed daily; the width of this well was 4.5 m at the top and 3 m in the lower part. By 7th April, five eggs had been laid on the pump ledge (maximum width 80 cm), 10 m from the top of the well and 4.5 m above the water surface; three of the eggs were scattered and two were against the wall, and, when a sixth egg appeared, one of the scattered eggs was placed against the wall to make a clutch of four in the nest. Once the hen was seen incubating, visits to the well were curtailed; by 27th April, however, the owls had deserted. Subsequently, the owls were found about 100 m away at a third old well, the diameter of which was 3.2 m narrowing to about 2.7 m: by 23rd May, five eggs had been laid on a ledge 9.6 m from the top and 5.7 m from the water; when the well was next visited, on 22nd June, the eggs were apparently deserted, there being no sign of the owls. On 14th July, a third clutch, of six eggs, had been laid farther along the same ledge, and on 13th August four owlets had hatched. These thrived until 12th September, when two had fallen to the bottom of the well, one having drowned and the other ending up on a small patch of exposed mud; the other two were still on the ledge, but a rescue attempt resulted in one falling off, and eventually only two were rescued alive. Since it was not practical to place the owlets in a safe place where they could be fed by the parents, hand rearing was attempted.

It is thought that the Barn Owls chose this unusual nest site because of lack of suitable, more orthodox sites in the surrounding countryside. House mice *Mus musculus*, common rats *Rattus norvegicus*, shrews *Sorex*, young rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* and lizards *Lacerta* abound in the area.

WENDY NAZAR, MICHAEL NAZAR and IAN F. KEYMER

*Vale Grifo, Aretortas, Almadena 8600, Lagos, Portugal*

*The Old Smithy, The Green, Edgefield, Melton Constable, Norfolk NR24 2AL*

**Robin attacking common lizard** On 10th June 1985, on Mousehold Heath, Norwich, Norfolk, I noticed an adult Robin *Erithacus rubecula* vigorously attacking a small common lizard *Lacerta vivipara*. The Robin would leap forward, seize the lizard and shake it violently, often beating it against the ground ('flogging' it), either to kill it or perhaps to break it into smaller pieces; it would then drop the lizard and jump back. The Robin repeatedly made these attacks, flying off only when I approached to within a metre or two; the lizard lay motionless between onslaughts. The reptile, on examination, measured 4 cm; it had recently lost its tail, presumably during the attacks, and had some damage to the body scales around the tail stump and on the head. After about a minute, it recovered and was released. The only reference I have found to Robins attacking lizards involved one taking young sand lizards *L. agilis* (C. Mead, 1984, *Robins*). Whether the common lizard was viewed as potential prey is not clear.

P. J. HEATH

*Flat 7, 2 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe, Norwich, Norfolk*

**Male Blackbird feeding wasps to young** During weather conditions bordering on drought in the summer of 1984, I watched a male Blackbird *Turdus merula* in my garden at Levens, Cumbria. He was feeding wasps, which I identified as tree wasps *Vespula sylvestris*, to his young (the female Blackbird had been killed by a Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*). The Blackbird approached the wasps in a cotoneaster *Cotoneaster*, brought one to the ground and killed it with about 20 pecks of his bill; he then tucked the insect into his bill and selected a further wasp, although this was not killed immediately. The prey was then fed to the fledgling Blackbirds in the neighbouring garden. This behaviour continued at intervals of 10-15 minutes throughout the afternoon and on the following day. Initially, at least 100 wasps were visible, but on the second day there were only 20-25, and thereafter only the occasional one was seen. Only female wasps sting, but it seems highly unlikely that the wasps were solely males. T. R. Birkhead (*Brit. Birds* 67: 221-229) included the Blackbird among species recorded eating social wasps (Vespidae), but I know of no reference to Blackbirds feeding wasps to their young.

LESLIE J. HALL

Causeway End, Levens, Cumbria

**Warblers fleeing from attacks by swallowtail butterfly** On 1st August 1984, a hot and sunny day, at Hickling Broad NNR, Norfolk, I observed a swallowtail *Papilio papilio* patrolling a 50-m stretch of pathway bordered on one side by a reedbed and on the other by willows *Salix*. During 15 minutes' observation, I saw it react aggressively towards a Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* (twice) and a Sedge Warbler *A. schoenobaenus*. On each occasion, the warbler emerged from the reedbed, took flight, was chased by the swallowtail, and dived quickly back into the reedbed. I can only assume that the butterfly thought that the warbler was an intruder into its territory which represented some form of threat.

B. D. HARDING

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The late John Heath commented: 'Yes, I think this must be a reaction to the warblers entering the swallowtail's territory. I haven't seen it in Britain, but there are, of course, few recorded observations on this species here.' EDS

**Goldcrests eating lichen-covered bark** On 21st January 1984, at East Meon, Hampshire, while watching a party of Goldcrests *Regulus regulus* foraging in a hedgerow, I noticed that two individuals spent some time pecking vigorously at a decayed branch of traveller's-joy *Clematis vitalba* which was covered in a green lichen. They extracted and ate small parts. (One individual's activity seemed to attract the others, which then proceeded to attack the lichen-covered branch and eat small quantities. Subsequent examination revealed no trace of insect life; the Goldcrests seemed to devour the lichen-covered bark for itself and no other reason. The

birds made no attempt to catch small insects in the area. I can find no mention in the literature of birds eating lichen.

E. M. RAYNOR

*Priors Mead, Nash Meadow, South Warnborough, Hampshire*

We recently published a record of Long-tailed Tits *Aegithalos caudatus* apparently eating lichen (*Brit. Birds* 80: 169). EDS

**Possible sap-sucking by Long-tailed Tits** During cold weather in late February 1985, near Hitchin, Hertfordshire, I noticed a flock of Long-tailed Tits *Aegithalos caudatus* returning repeatedly to a wet patch on the trunk of a sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*. The patch was presumably oozing sap, although it may possibly have been meltwater from a deposit of ice. The tits were drinking the liquid, and tolerated an approach to within about 1 m. Other species were in the vicinity, including Blue *Parus caeruleus* and Great Tits *P. major* and Treecreepers *Certhia familiaris*, but none was seen to drink from the wet patch.

NIGEL AGAR

*34 Oakfield Avenue, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 9JB*

Further observations of a similar nature will be welcome, particularly if they help to resolve the question of whether the liquid being drunk is sap or water. EDS

**Double song of Cirl Bunting** Most standard textbooks describe the song of the Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* as a metallic one-note rattle, perhaps recalling that of a Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*. *The Handbook* also describes a 'rare variant', scarcely, if at all, distinguishable from the song of the Yellowhammer *E. citrinella*, but without the final 'cheese'. During the springs of 1982, 1983 and 1984, in Somerset, I spent some time watching and listening to one, sometimes two, male Cirl Buntings. It gradually dawned on me that they were regularly giving two similar, but quite distinct song types: most frequently heard (about 80% of all songs in 1982) was a fast, high-pitched, dry, insect-like trill; the second type was a slower, lower-pitched, almost 'dribbling' trill, vaguely recalling Yellowhammer or, perhaps, Lesser Whitethroat (the quality maybe even recalling Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*). An individual would usually sing for a considerable time in one bush before flying low and direct to another bush, sometimes as much as a couple of hundred metres away, where it would then often switch song type. It would sometimes also switch songs after an intervening feeding bout, but, on other occasions, the songs would be alternated more randomly: perhaps five to ten bursts of the first song and then five to ten bursts of the second, before reverting once again to the original.

It is not known whether this double song is typical of all Cirl Buntings, or whether it is peculiar to those in this particular area. Also, I do not know whether the textbook 'Lesser Whitethroat song' refers to the first song type or the second, although the first did not to my ear suggest Lesser Whitethroat. The reasons for this double song are not immediately apparent, but, since Cirl Buntings can have extremely large territories (*Brit. Birds* 75: 105-108), could it be that the two songs are used in order to

create an illusion of the presence of two individuals so that a larger territory may be defended?

K. E. VINICOMBE

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The theory that song variants may create an illusion of the presence of more than one bird—known as the 'Beau Geste hypothesis'—was first discussed by J. R. Krebs (1977, *Anim. Behaviour* 25: 475-478). It has, however, been criticised (see *A Dictionary of Birds*, 1985). Eds

## Announcements

**West Palearctic List Committee** The main aims of the WPLC were announced last year (*Brit. Birds* 80: 176-177). National representatives on the WPLC have now been appointed for most West Palearctic countries, as follows:

- ALBANIA No representative yet nominated  
 ALGERIA No representative yet nominated  
 AZORES No representative yet nominated  
 AUSTRIA No representative yet nominated  
 BELGIUM René-Marie Lafontaine, IRSNB, 29 Rue Vautier, 1040 Brussels  
 BULGARIA Dr Taniu Michev, Research & Co-ordination Centre for Environmental Protection, Yuri Gagarin St 2, Sofia 1113  
 CANARY ISLANDS Dr Aurelio Martín, Departamento de Biología Animal (Zoología), Universidad de la Laguna, 38206 La Laguna, Tenerife  
 CAPE VERDE ISLANDS No representative yet nominated  
 CYPRUS C. J. L. Bennett, The Cyprus Ornithological Society 1957, PO Box 4319, Nicosia  
 CZECHOSLOVAKIA Dr Karel Šiastný, Institute of Applied Ecology and Ecotechnology, Agriculture University in Prague, 281 63 Kostelec n.Č.lesy  
 DENMARK Klaus Malling Olsen, Møllegade 21 st. th, DK-2200 Copenhagen N  
 EGYPT No representative yet nominated  
 ESTONIAN SSR Dr Vilju Lilleleht, Institute of Zoology and Botany, 21 Vanemuise St. SU-202400 Tartu  
 FAROE ISLANDS No representative yet nominated  
 FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY No representative yet nominated  
 FINLAND Lasse J. Laine, Brontie 2 as 2, SF-02400 Kirkkinummi  
 FRANCE Dr Philippe J. Dubois, LPO, 51 rue Langier, 75017 Paris  
 GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC No representative yet nominated  
 GREECE George I. Handrinos, 50 El Venizelou Street, 166 75 Glyfada  
 HUNGARY Dr László Haraszthy, Madartani Intezet, H-1121 Budapest, Költő u. 21  
 ICELAND Dr Aevor Petersen, Icelandic Museum of Natural History, PO Box 5320, 125 Reykjavik  
 IRAQ No representative yet nominated  
 ISRAEL Hadoram Shirihi, PO Box 4168, Eilat 88102  
 ITALY Marco Gustin, Stazione Romana per L'Osservazione e la Protezione degli Uccelli, c/o Oasi Naturale WWF Bosco di Palo, Via Palo Laziale 2, 00055 Ladispoli (Rome)  
 JORDAN No representative yet nominated  
 KUWAIT No representative yet nominated  
 LATVIAN SSR Dr Jānis Baumanis, Laboratory of Ornithology, Miera 3, Salaspils  
 LEBANON No representative yet nominated  
 LIBYA No representative yet nominated  
 LUXEMBOURG David Crowther, 18 rue des Eglantiers, L-8227 Mamer  
 MADEIRA Dr Francis Zino, Rua Dr. Pita 7, 9000 Funchal  
 MALTA Joe Sultana, The Ornithological Society, PO Box 448, Valletta  
 MOROCCO No representative yet nominated  
 NETHERLANDS Arnoud B. van den Berg, Duinlustparkweg 98, 2082 EG Santpoort-Zuid  
 NORWAY Viggo Ree, c/o Zoological Museum, Sars' gate 1, N-0562 Oslo 5  
 POLAND Dr Tadeusz Stawarczyk, Wrocław University, Museum of Natural History, Sienkiewicza 21, 50-335 Wrocław  
 PORTUGAL Dr António Teixeira, CEMPA, Serviço Nacional de Parques, Reservas e Conservação da Natureza, Rua da Lapa 73, 1200 Lisboa  
 REPUBLIC OF IRELAND Killian Mullarney, Redshire House, Redshire Road, Murrinstown, Co. Wexford  
 ROMANIA Dr Victor Ciocchia, Str. Pavilionale CFR 30, R-2200 Braşov  
 SPAIN Dr Eduardo de Juana, Catedra de Zoología (Vertebrados), Facultad de Biología, Universidad Complutense, 28040 Madrid



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SWITZERLAND Dr Raffael Winkler, Naturhistorisches Museum, Augustinergasse 2, CH-4001 Basel

SYRIA No representative yet nominated

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UNITED KINGDOM Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

YUGOSLAVIA Iztok Geister, 64202 Naklo, Pokopaliska pot 13

We hope that the gaps will soon be filled by nominations from the relevant ornithological societies. All correspondence should be directed to the WPLC, c/o Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, England.

**Reduced subscriptions to 'BB'** We are delighted that co-operation continues between *British Birds* and the following organisations, whose members\* are entitled to claim a reduced subscription to *British Birds*.

American Birding Association (*Birding*)  
 Army Birdwatching Society  
 Banbury Ornithological Society  
 Bardsey Bird Observatory  
 Bedfordshire Natural History Society  
 Bristol Naturalists' Society  
 Bristol Ornithological Club  
 British Ornithologists' Union  
 British Trust for Ornithology  
 Buckinghamshire Bird Club  
 Cambridge Bird Club  
 Cardiff Naturalists' Society  
 Cornwall Bird-Watching & Preservation Soc.  
 Chester & District Ornithological Society  
 Christchurch Harbour Ornithological Club  
 Cumbria Association of Nat. Hist. Socs.  
 Derbyshire Ornithological Society  
 Devon Bird Watching & Preservation Soc.  
 Dorset Bird Club  
 Dorset Nat. Hist. & Arch. Soc.  
 Dungeness Bird Observatory  
 Durham Bird Club  
 Dutch Birding Association  
 Essex Birdwatching & Preservation Soc.  
 Fair Isle Bird Observatory  
 Finland, Association of Ornithological Socs.  
 Filey Brigg Ornithological Group  
 Gloucestershire Naturalists' Society  
 Gwent Ornithological Society  
 Hampshire Ornithological Society  
 Hertfordshire Natural History Society  
 Huntingdonshire Fauna & Flora Soc.  
 Irish Wildbird Conservancy  
 Isle of Wight Nat. Hist. & Arch. Soc.  
 Kent Ornithological Society  
 Lancaster & District Birdwatching Soc.  
 Leeds Birdwatchers' Club  
 Leicestershire & Rutland Orn. Soc.  
 Leigh Ornithological Society  
*Limicola* (subscribers to)

Lincolnshire Bird Club  
 London Natural History Society  
 Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society  
 Norfolk Ornithologists' Association  
 Northamptonshire Bird Club  
 Northern Ireland Ornithologists' Club  
 Northumberland & Tyneside Bird Club  
 Nottinghamshire Birdwatchers  
 Oriental Bird Club  
 Ornithological Society of the Middle East  
 Oxford Ornithological Society  
 Portland Bird Observatory  
 Reading Ornithological Club  
 Rotherham & District Orn. Soc.  
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 Royal Naval Bird Watching Society  
 Royal Society for the Protection of Birds  
 Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory  
 Scottish Ornithologists' Club  
 Sheffield Bird Study Group  
 Shetland Bird Club  
 Shropshire Ornithological Society  
 Société Jersiaise  
 Somerset Ornithological Society  
 South Walney Nature Reserve  
 Suffolk Ornithologists' Group  
 Surbiton & District Birdwatching Society  
 Surrey Bird Club  
 Sussex Ornithological Society  
 Sveriges Ornitologiska Förening  
 Teesmouth Bird Club  
 Wakefield Naturalists' Society  
 Western Field Ornithologists (*Western Birds*)  
 West Midland Bird Club  
 West Wales Trust for Nature Conservation  
 Wildfowl Trust  
 Wiltshire Ornithological Society  
 York Ornithological Club  
 Young Ornithologists' Club (aged 11-18)  
 All holders of a current UK ringing permit

\*Libraries, reading circles, universities and other institutions are not eligible.

We do urge all birdwatchers to join their local society or club and to support and participate in the surveys and other fieldwork organised by national as well as local bird organisations.

We limit the number of participants in our Special Offer Subscription Scheme, but applications from clubs or societies to join (or rejoin) should be made to Erika Sharrock, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

**New books in British BirdShop** This month, we have added the following items:

Flint, Boehme, Kostin & Kuznetsov *Birds of the USSR*

Gooders *Where to Watch Birds in Europe*

Johnsgard *Diving Birds of North America*

McFarland *The Oxford Companion to Animal Behaviour*

Soper & BTO *Go Birding!*

Stroud, Reed, Pienkowski & Lindsay *Birds, Bogs and Forestry*

The following special offers are also available this month: (1) *The Birds of Africa*; (2) *Crows of the World*; (3) *The Natural History of the USSR*; (4) *The Frontiers of Bird Identification*.

Please use the order forms on pages xi & xii.

## Reviews

**Seabirds: feeding ecology and role in marine ecosystems. Edited by J. P. Croxall.** Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987. 408 pages. £30.00.

Most seabirds eat fish and are therefore potential competitors with the various, and mostly expanding, human fisheries; seabirds are now attracting much scientific effort. To quote from the apt cover notes, 'this book is concerned with the ways in which seabirds function as predators in the marine environment; in particular about how they find and catch food and how much of it they consume.' The book also 'examines quantitatively the interactions of seabird communities with their prey.' There are chapters from many of the best researchers in the field, and the volume is introduced, edited and summarised by John Croxall in his usual impressive manner. Specific topics range from the diet or feeding ecology of penguins, Procellariiformes and Pelecaniformes, through kleptoparasitism, flight and diving, to the links between birds and krill. The book will be outside the price range of most *BB* readers, but anyone seriously interested in seabirds should at least glance at a library copy as they will find some very interesting, and usually clearly written, contributions.

MIKE HARRIS

**Diving Birds of North America. By Paul A. Johnsgard.** University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln & London, 1987. 294 pages; 32 colour plates; 38 line-drawings; 31 maps. £42.75.

In recent years, Professor Johnsgard has produced a series of monographs on a variety of interesting bird families on a North American or world-wide basis. All these were taxonomically discrete, but now he has turned his hand to three families—divers (Gaviidae), grebes (Podicipedidae), and auks (Alcidae)—which are either totally unrelated (divers/grebes, grebes/auks) or of still uncertain affinity (divers/auks). These were the subject also of the classic by A. C. Bent. The present book is a worthy successor to this, ably drawing together 60 odd years of further information.

The organisation of the text is similar to Johnsgard's other monographs, the bulk being taken up with the species accounts covering four divers, six grebes, and 21 auks. All are surface divers and underwater swimmers, and it is this which links them and makes them suitable as joint subjects of a single book though, of course, the divers and grebes use their feet to progress below the surface while the auks employ their wings.

Like Bent's *Life Histories of North American Diving Birds* (1919), Johnsgard's monograph is really a handbook in that it is essentially a formal compilation rather than a really intimate study of one or more of the subject families based on that deep, specialised familiarity which comes from years of intensive research. It is on this basis, perhaps, that the book should be judged, inviting comparison especially with *BBP* vol. 1 (for divers and grebes), on which it has drawn heavily, and *BBP* vol. 4 (for auks). It scores over *BBP* in its six introductory chapters, where the comparative biology of the three families is outlined

in some detail. Although, in some of these, one might have welcomed additional comparisons, say with certain diving ducks or cormorants, this introductory material is a valuable feature of the book, as are the various appendixes (including those giving identification keys).

In its species treatments of the same four divers, however, it hardly improves on *BWP* vol. 1 and is not so detailed; the same is even more true of the grebes, except here we have the bonus of two more species accounts (for the Least Grebe *Tachybaptus dominicus* and Western Grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis*) and a fuller account of the Pied-billed *Podilymbus podiceps*. So it is in its coverage of the auks, I suspect, that the book will prove of most value to general ornithologists and birdwatchers in the Old World. Here there is an overlap of only seven species with *BWP* vol. 4, so the coverage of the other 14 auks usually complements the sections in that book which, though listed, seems hardly to have been drawn on at all. Thus, between Johnsgard and *BWP* vol. 4, we have a most useful coverage of nearly all the auks. Though specialists may wish to wait until the appearance of Dr Asa C. Thorenson's forthcoming monograph on the whole family, the rest of us should be happy with Johnsgard, especially as he was able to consult Dr Thorenson's text and thus reduce the area of overlap. There is also the bonus of those comparisons with the divers and grebes.

K. E. L. SIMMONS

**The Oxford Companion to Animal Behaviour.** Edited by David McFarland. OUP, Oxford, 1987. 685 pages; many line-drawings. Paperback £12.95.

This standard reference work first appeared in 1981. Although it has not been revised for this new edition, various small corrections have been made and, more importantly, an extremely detailed index has been added. Ethology, or the study of animal behaviour, has been growing apace in recent decades and this work performs a great service in making recent advances available to the non-scientist, while at the same time providing the expert in one aspect of ethology with up-to-date information about other areas of study.

The concept is a good one: get a team of leading ethologists, about 75 of them, to write about their particular field, allowing them several thousand words for the more important topics with references to further reading, edit these texts into a very readable and harmonious whole and add numerous shorter entries to cover subsidiary subjects. The result is closer to an encyclopedia than a dictionary, with the subject matter arranged alphabetically and dealt with in considerable depth.

Although it deserves a place on any bookshelf as an invaluable reference work, this is also a great book for dipping, the eye usually being caught by one of the line-drawings with which the book is generously provided. The illustrations are all carefully chosen to help make a point, and excel in both clarity and artistry.

I have enjoyed dipping and reading on a wide variety of subjects, but I have enjoyed it more since I alighted upon the article devoted to the history of the study of animal behaviour. This should be required reading for anyone coming fresh to the subject, and for those professionals already involved who might not be paying sufficient heed to those who have gone before. As principally a bird specialist, I could, prior to reading this article, conjure up the names of Heinroth, Lorenz and Tinbergen, who have certainly made the greatest modern contributions to the science of ethology, but I am now aware of the long list of earlier workers on whose sound foundations those famous three built their own notable studies.

From no index at all, which in any book other than a dictionary is a crime against the reader, the publishers have now provided no less than a massive 72 pages to index a text of 610 pages. It is, needless to say, incredibly detailed and a boon to the reader wishing to research a particular aspect or check through references to a single species. In at least one case, however, the indexer has over-reached himself. On looking up 'duck' (what else?) I was surprised to see a sub-heading of 'tool-using', and even more surprised on turning to the indicated page to find that the text concerned captive monkeys and chimpanzees using pieces of bread to lure ducks within reach to capture and kill them. That is no more tool-using by ducks than this is a review of me by this book.

M. A. OGILVIE

# News and comment

*Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch*

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

**Another Islay controversy** By early February 1988, ten licences had been issued allowing the shooting of Greenland White-fronted Geese *Anser albifrons flavirostris* on the island of Islay. Once again, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland has ignored advice from the Nature Conservancy Council and seems to have brushed aside the fact that a team funded by the Manpower Services Commission had been employed to scare the geese from fields where they might cause damage. The fact that this declining race (only some 21,000 individuals exist) needs protection, and the notion that a solution to the alleged problems on Islay might be solved by other, less dramatic measures, seem to have been overlooked too. Shooting under licence is supposed to be a last-resort tactic when other methods of control have failed; and where there is serious damage to crops. It is quite clear that 'other methods' have scarcely been given a chance to succeed; and the proof of serious damage seems slender, to say the least. We hope that proper discussions will be held and other solutions considered before *next* winter: in this day and age, there is really no excuse for DAFS to behave like this. It may not bother them, but it bothers us that they are earning, for Scotland, an undeserved reputation for being backward in conservation thinking; this is even worse when we hear that the Greenlanders are angry about the whole affair, having themselves invested so much hard work in protecting the birds' breeding grounds.

**NCC needs volunteers** The Nature Conservancy Council has asked us to draw readers' attention to its need for volunteers to help with its Coastwatch Survey, which aims to gather basic data about some 9,500 km of coastline, about half of it in Scotland. Details of habitats will be gathered, as well as information on potentially damaging activities, all of which will be invaluable for future planning of survey and conservation work. For more details,

write to Tom Mercer, NCC, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA.

**Birdwatch 1988** David Tomlinson has reminded us that this year's *Country Life*/Royal Society for Nature Conservation Birdwatch takes place over the weekend of 14th/15th May. Teams of four people have to see how many species they can find over 24 hours (midnight to midnight) on either day; sponsorship money raised goes to the British Wildlife Appeal. This event is now firmly established as part of the birding calendar, and there are handsome prizes for the winning teams. It is not too late to enter, and David will gladly send you more details and an application form if you write to him now at *Country Life*/RSNC County Birdwatch, King's Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London SE1 9LS, or telephone 01-261 6665.

**BTO's City Launch of £1.5 million appeal** At a definitely up-market Reception, held at the BP offices in London on 8th February, the BTO launched its appeal to the City for the £719,847 needed to bring its National Centre for Ornithology Appeal fund up to the £1.5 million target figure. The BTO has outgrown its Beech Grove headquarters and plans to erect a new purpose-built Centre in Tring, which will not only house the BTO's scientific and administrative staff (now numbering over 70), but will also provide meeting rooms and conference accommodation for use by visiting groups of ornithologists. With less than 15% of its income now being derived from members' subscriptions, the BTO's expansion reflects its growing reliance on governmental bodies and individual concerns, which seek the facts relevant to developments such as the proposed Severn Barrage. As the BTO's President, James Hancock, made clear in his description of the Trust's role, the BTO provides the facts, it is not a conservation body—a task ably carried out by, for instance, the BTO's 'Big Sister', as he called the RSPB.

His Grace The Duke of Westminster and Sir Terence Beckett spoke in support of the Appeal, and, with a room crowded with representatives of financial and business concerns, the BTO will surely see its plans come to fruition. When they do, we must all hope that the BTO remembers that its members are its strength, and that its members should always come first, whoever may currently be controlling the purse-strings. There are plenty of research organisations with professional staff, but there's only one BTO, with its expert taskforce of nearly 9,000 amateur ornithologists.

If you want to contribute to their Appeal or join the Trust, write to BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR. (JTRS)

**'Putni dabā'** This is the title of a new annual journal, published jointly by the Latvian Ornithological Society and the Institute of Biology of the Latvian SSR Academy of Sciences. The first issue contains papers reporting on the Latvian breeding birds atlas project during 1980-84; the seasonal and daily singing activity of *Acrocephalus* and *Locustella* warblers and the Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*; the nesting of Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus*, Common Gulls *L. canus* and Common Terns *Sterna hirundo* on roofs in Riga; and the occurrence of Bearded Tits *Panurus biarmicus* and Penduline Tits *Remiz pendulinus* in winter at the large coastal lakes during 1973/74-1983/84. English summaries are provided for these papers. For further information, write to the Latvian Ornithological Society, Miera st. 3, 229021 Salaspils, Latvian SSR, USSR. (JTRS)

**Black Robin news** Having mentioned the desperate plight of the Chatham Island Black Robin *Petroica traversi* before (*Brit. Birds* 77: 575), we were very pleased to learn from the ICBP's newsletter, *World Birdwatch*, that 40 survived the 1987 winter. The numbers include a record 14 pairs, eight of which had started breeding when the newsletter went to press. All being well, there could be about 60 individuals in the population by the time you read this, all descended from just one pair.

**Good signs from Spain** We are grateful to David Smallridge for sending us a

cutting from an English weekly newspaper produced on the Costa Blanca. This draws attention to the Junta de Andalucia's third campaign to protect insectivorous birds in its regions; Jaws prohibit the hunting, capture and sale of birds, with a fine (per bird) of up to 10,000 ptas (£48). Illegal hunting is still widespread, but the Junta seems determined to tackle the problem, partly through a programme of education and information. We wish it well.

**Golden Jubilee Cruise** David Saunders of the Dyfed Wildlife Trust has written to tell us of its Golden Jubilee Cruise, which takes place on 26th June 1988: if you get in touch now (Cruise Booking Officer, Dyfed Wildlife Trust, 7 Market Street, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire SA61 1NF; tel. Haverfordwest (0437) 5462 or 67062), there may be some places left. The cruise will go around Grassholm, Skokholm and Skomer, so there should be a good day's birding.

**Haslemere Centenary** Our congratulations go to the Haslemere Natural History Society on achieving its century this year. The Surrey organisation has been closely associated with the Haslemere Educational Museum throughout, and the Museum celebrates its centenary in 1988 too. In addition to the normal programme of outings and lectures, special celebrations include an exhibition in Haslemere, a garden party at local Shulbrede Priory and the publication of a centenary booklet on the Society's history. An interesting joint *conversazione* in the autumn will feature short talks on the personalities who have guided and influenced the two bodies in the past.

**Gibraltar publication** One of the best things to reach us in the mail recently was a copy of *The Birds of the Straits of Gibraltar*, sent to us by John Cortes, Secretary of the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society. This is in fact the sixth issue of their journal *Alectoris* (which last appeared in 1983) and is a special one, written by John and Dr Clive Finlayson, covering the whole area from the Guadalquivir in the northwest to the eastern end of the Serrania de Ronda and south to the Strait itself. It divides the study area into nine sections, dealing with topography and land-use, as well as birds; separate chapters deal with habitats, conser-

vation and the systematic list. This will prove an invaluable publication to anyone interested in the region, but we echo the thoughts of the authors when they say how many gaps there are in our knowledge, even though the area has been so 'well known' for so long. Hopefully, birding visitors will do something positive to fill some of these gaps. Copies cost only £3 (including p & p) and are available from Dr J. E. Cortes, 8/8 Buena Vista Road, Gibraltar.

**Strangers and champagne in Bucks** At the Buckinghamshire Bird Club meeting on 4th February, David Cottridge entertained 110 members and guests with his talk on 'Strangers in our Land'. Five people identified all five species in the *BB* Mystery Photographs Competition; the Club's Chairman, Jerry Cook, drew the name of Henry Mayer-Gross as the winner of the traditional bottle of champagne, the unlucky four being Philip Cruttendon, Martin Flack, Andy Harding and Mike Wallen. (Contributed by Tim Davis)

**An Irish joke** Remember that sick and hungry Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

discovered in Co. Kerry, which we reported in March (*Brit. Birds* 81: 143)? We cannot resist the temptation to repeat the headline given to the story by the editor of *IWC News*: 'Ill-eagle Alien' (*IWC News* 54: 2).

**Changes of Recorders** Tony Armstrong has taken over from K. Baldrige as Recorder for Co. Durham: his address is 39 Western Hill, Durham DH1 4RL; telephone Durham (091) 386 1519. In Cheshire and Wirral, Jonathan Guest has been succeeded by Tony Broome, 'Sibrica', 3 Martin Close, Offerton Close, Stockport SK2 5UW. In Scotland, R. H. Dennis of Inchdryne, Nethybridge, Inverness-shire PH25 3EF, has taken over from A. R. Mainwood as Recorder for Highland (Sutherland), and E. W. E. Maughan of Burnside, Reay, Thurso, Caithness KW14 7RG, has taken over from S. Manson as Recorder for Highland (Caithness).

**Change of address of Recorder** I. P. Gibson, Recorder for parts of Strathclyde, has now moved to c/o Wood, 47 Kilbowie Road, South Carbrain, Cumbernauld G67 2PZ.

## January reports

Keith Allsopp and Ian Dawson



**These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records.  
Unless otherwise stated, dates refer to January 1987.**

The month was dominated by unsettled cyclonic westerly weather. Very moist, warm air from the Azores meeting the colder Arctic air caused strong winds and very heavy rain. Fortunately, the warm air flow covered Britain and Ireland, and the extensive cloud cover kept night frosts to a minimum. Only on 22nd when the cold air penetrated to the south was there extensive snow cover in lowland areas, but this was short-lived as warm air followed in the next day.

### One Swallow unmakes a winter

The unusually mild conditions were the main feature of the month. The effect on bird mortality will show only from ringing returns and census results during the coming breeding seasons. The survival of insectivorous species when insect activity is minimal is low, but a **Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* at Bromeswell (Suffolk) on 21st must have found sufficient numbers of

insects flying to keep it alive. An **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* on Shetland on 3rd might find enough to feed on in the stonewalls, and **Cetti's Warblers** *Cettia cetti*, with one being seen at Ditchford Gravel-pits (Northamptonshire) on 18th, may well benefit from a mild winter and extend their breeding range. Of particular interest would be the survival of a **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus*, which was found feeding along a stream in a suburban housing estate in Ashby de la Zouch (Leicestershire) on 9th, but not identified until late in the month. It had managed to avoid a mauling from the local cats, but not from itinerant ringers. Other unseasonal species were a **Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur* at Scarborough (North Yorkshire) and a **Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* at Woolverstone (Suffolk) on 31st.

#### Divers to herons

Apart from the usual offshore concentrations, with over 40 **Black-throated Divers** *Gavia arctica* in Cornwall and 12 in Orkney, there were only four single inland records of the three common divers. Grebes showed a similar pattern: ten **Red-necked Grebes** *Podiceps grisegena* were noted off the Cleveland coast on 18th, and five were found inland (plates 141 & 142); two **Slavonian Grebes** *P. auritus* were on Hanningfield Reservoir (Essex) all month, and the **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* remained at Kenfig Pool (Mid Glamorgan); **Black-necked Grebes** *Podiceps nigricollis* were recorded mainly along the English south coast.

The high winds at the beginning of the month brought a **Leach's Petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* up the Bristol Channel (Avon) on 3rd, another to Sandbanks (Dorset) on 6th, and one was picked up dead at Netherseal (Derbyshire) on 10th. The numbers of **Cormorants** *Phalacrocorax carbo* wintering inland continued to increase, and some 300 were at Little Paxton Gravel-pits (Cambridgeshire) during the month. One of few notable reports from Spurn Point (Humberside) was a **Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* on 3rd; two other Bitterns were found in Cumbria, and one stayed at Holywell Pond (Northumberland), all these reports being away from their normal breeding sites. Single **Little Egrets** *Egretta garzetta* continued to haunt Poole Harbour (Dorset) and Frampton Marsh (Lincolnshire), and two **Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* remained on the Taw Estuary (Devon).

#### Wildfowl

A flock of 400 **Bewick's Swans** *Cygnus columbianus* at Ramsey Heights (Cambridgeshire) and another of 500 in Lancashire were notable concentrations; but



more exceptional were the 429 **Whooper Swans** *C. cygnus* at Martin Mere (Lancashire) and some 200 in Cumbria, while 500 stayed on the Ouse Washes (Norfolk). The 404 **Bean Geese** *Anser fabalis* remained at Buckenham (Norfolk), with small groups associating with other goose flocks. Five Bean Geese could be found among the 3,000 **White-fronted Geese** *A. albifrons* at Slimbridge (Gloucestershire), as (sometimes) could an elusive **Lesser White-fronted Goose** *A. erythropus*. Some movement was noted: 60 **White-fronted Geese** of the Greenland race *flavirostris* arrived at The Loons (Orkney) on 18th, and, in the disturbed weather at the beginning of the year, 100 **Barnacle Geese** *Branta leucopsis* flew over Westwood Pool (Worcestershire) on 4th. In the settled flocks of **Brent Geese** *B. bernicla* in the Cley (Norfolk) area, an individual of the race *nigricans* could still be found, as could a **Red-breasted Goose** *B. ruficollis*.

A record 9,000 **Wigeons** *Anas penelope* had 'whistled' into Martin Mere by 11th, two records each of **American Wigeons** *A. americana*, **Falcated Ducks** *A. falcata* and **Teals** *A. crecca* of the Nearctic race *carolinensis* were received, and there was also another report of a wintering **Garganey** *A. querquedula*.



la. Scattered around Britain and Ireland were eight **Red-crested Pochards** *Netta rufina*, four **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* and six **Ferruginous Ducks** *A. nyroca*. Single **King Eiders** *Somateria spectabilis* could be found wintering on Loch Fleet (Highland) and at Reawick (Shetland); four **Surf Scoters** *Melanitta perspicillata* were off Ireland, three off Scotland and two off Wales. Of the eight inland **Long-tailed Ducks** *Clangula hyemalis*, only three stayed the month: most quickly moved on. **Smews** *Mergus albellus* were numerous in Southeast England, where 50 remained for most of the month; five records in the English Midlands were mainly of shorter-staying groups and individuals,

and elsewhere one was found on Loch of Cluney (Orkney) on 18th.

### Birds of prey

As in December 1987, sightings of **Red Kites** *Milvus milvus* in eastern England were again the highlight: apart from singles at Sevenoaks (Kent) on 5th and Gouthwaite Reservoir (North Yorkshire) on 17th, the other four were in East Anglia and could have related to the same individual. The only two reports of **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* were also from that area. A brief view of a **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* at Thorney Island (West Sussex) was an exciting experience on 10th, as were the flying



141 & 142. Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*, Merseyside, January 1988 (Steve Young)



displays of three **Peregrines** *F. peregrinus* over the New Grounds, Slimbridge, late in the month.

### Wading birds

Two **Cranes** *Grus grus* stayed at Cloyne (Co. Cork) all month (plate 143), and the unobliging Dorset **Little Bustard** *Tetrax tetrax* was not seen after 5th. An **Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta* had returned to Snettisham Pits (Norfolk) by 26th. Two **Little Stints** *Calidris minuta* were wintering at Elmley (Kent), and a **Curlew Sandpiper** *C. ferruginea* was at Eling (Hampshire). The **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* at Belfast Lough remained for another month, but one near Milford Haven (Dyfed) was not reported after 1st. Another Nearctic wader, a **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia*, stayed at Seaview (Isle of Wight) all month, and another was found on 18th on the River Plym (Devon), where it remained until the end of the month.

### Skuas to auks

Three **Pomarine Skuas** *Stercorarius pomarinus* were seen inshore on the windy 2nd and 3rd; there were also three **Great Skuas** *S. skua*, one staying in Pegwell Bay (Kent) until 19th and another on the River Severn, confusing goose-watchers at Slimbridge in late January.

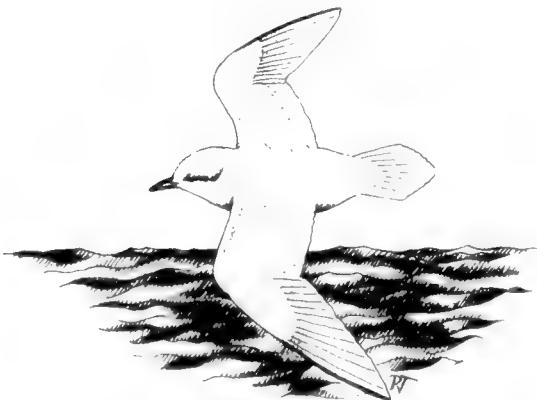
Of the 45 coastal records of **Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus*, 23 were at Folkestone (Kent) and eight were on Irish Sea coasts, all these being mainly long-stayers, whereas the seven inland records were mainly of transients. **Little Gulls** *L. minutus* were concentrated around Liverpool Bay early in the month, with 100 being around North Fylde (Lancashire) on 7th and ten at the Seaforth Nature Reserve (Merseyside) on 10th. Reports of Nearctic gulls included a **Bonaparte's Gull** *L. philadelphia* at Kilmore Quay (Co. Wexford) on



9th and 10th, and 14 mainly resident, wintering **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis*. **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucoides* numbered about 40 this month, most on Scottish coasts, but with ten inland in England, and few being seen in Ireland. **Glaucous Gulls** *L. hyperboreus* were also scarce in Ireland: half of the 50 records came from Scotland, and only seven from inland roosts in England. From the High Arctic, a **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* made a brief appearance at the Seaforth Nature Reserve on 3rd, and an **Ivory Gull** *Pagophila eburnea* was seen at Dungarvan (Co. Waterford) on 21st. A **Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis* appropriately spent the month at Sandwich Bay (Kent), another was seen at Musselburgh (Lothian) on 2nd, and the long-staying **Forster's Tern** *S. forsteri* was relocated at Holyhead, Anglesey (Gwynedd), on 10th to 24th. **Little Auks** *Alle alle* were reported along most coasts in only small numbers, except for 92 counted in two hours flying east past Gullane Point (Lothian) on 26th; a few tideline corpses were also found in that county, and one was found dead at Kenfig Pool on 3rd.

### Passerines

Winter flocks of **Shore Larks** *Eremophila alpestris* were never very common, but now they are increasingly rare, especially considering the great increase in birdwatching in recent years: just 16 individuals in three flocks were reported. With berries in abundance, the countryside was a potential paradise for **Waxwings** *Bombycilla garrulus*, but only a few discovered it: eight at Cleadon on 6th and one at Sunderland on 25th, all in Tyne & Wear. A **Dipper** *Cinclus cinclus* of the nominate, black-bellied, European race was relocated at Lemsford Springs (Hertford-



shire) on 23rd and remained to the end of the month. Just six **Great Grey Shrikes** *Lanius excubitor* were on regular patches, with two other transient sightings. Two **Goldfinches** *Carduelis carduelis* in Orkney on 14th were rarities and flocks of **Hawfinches** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* were watched in

Clumber Park (Nottinghamshire), Holkham Park (Norfolk) and at Cromford Canal (Derbyshire). **Lapland Buntings** *Calcarius lapponicus* remained fairly numerous on the east coast of Britain, and 12 were also found wintering at Kilmore Quay.



143. Cranes *Grus grus*, Co. Cork, January 1988 (Richard T. Mills)

## Monthly marathon

The headless wader (plate 63) was identified as

Marsh Sandpiper <i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	(49%)
Green Sandpiper <i>T. ochropus</i>	(18%)
Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	(10%)
Solitary Sandpiper <i>T. solitaria</i>	(9%)
Greenshank <i>T. nebularia</i>	(8%)
Wood Sandpiper <i>T. glareola</i>	(5%)

with a few votes for Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*, Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*, Spotted Redshank *T. erythropus* and Spotted Sandpiper *A. macularia*.

The most popular choice was the correct one. This Marsh Sandpiper was photographed in Kenya in November 1983 by David Tomlinson.

The two leading contenders both got this one right. E. Brodie has now achieved a four-in-a-row sequence of correct answers, and Anthony McGeehan has a five-in-a-row run, just half-way towards the

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ten-in-a-row sequence which could win him the SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday in Africa, Asia or North America.

This month's puzzle picture appears as plate 144.



144. Second 'Monthly marathon' competition. Photograph number 13. Identify the species. Rules are given on page 49. Send your answer *on a postcard* to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th June 1988

## Recent reports

*Compiled by Mark Boyd*

**This summary covers the period 21st March to 17th April 1988**

**Little Bittern** *Isobrychus minutus* St Mary's (Scilly), 1st April; near Woodmancote (West Sussex), released from care, 2nd-12th April; Portland Bill (Dorset), 16th April; Slapton Ley (Devon), 16th April.

**Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* Chew Valley Lake (Avon), 10th April; East Allington (Devon), from 14th April.

**White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* Wigan (Lancashire), 28th March; near St Catherine's Point (Isle of Wight), 29th-30th March; near Hook (Hampshire), 31st March; Rochdale (Lancashire), 31st March; north Norfolk coast, 1st-2nd April; Anglesey (Gwynedd), 4th-11th April.

**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* South Gare (Cleveland), 16th April.

**Crane** *Grus grus* Titchwell (Norfolk), 1st April; Hornsea Mere (Humberside), 11th April; Overy Marshes (Norfolk), from 16th April.

**Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Curbridge (Hampshire), from 4th April.

**Bonaparte's Gull** *Larus philadelphia* Plym Estuary (Devon), 27th March.

**Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* Plym Estuary, 27th-29th March.

**Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis* Portland Bill, 16th April.

**Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* St Mary's, from 4th April.

**Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* Near Thetford (Norfolk), male from 11th April.

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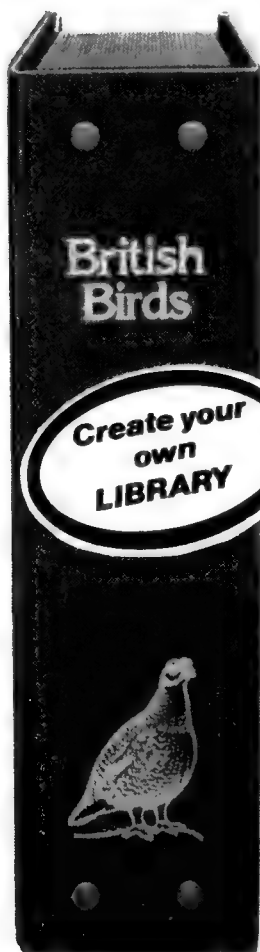
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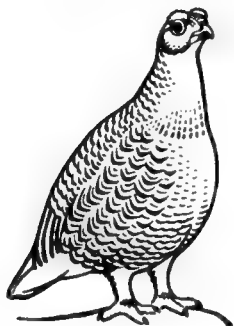
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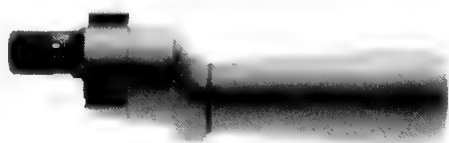
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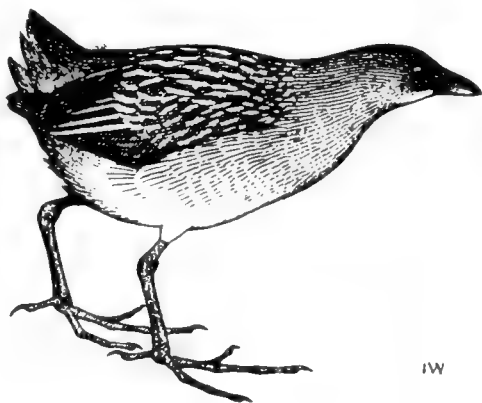
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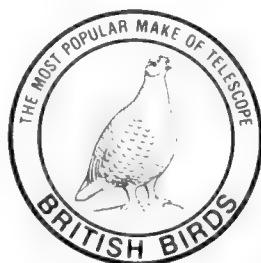
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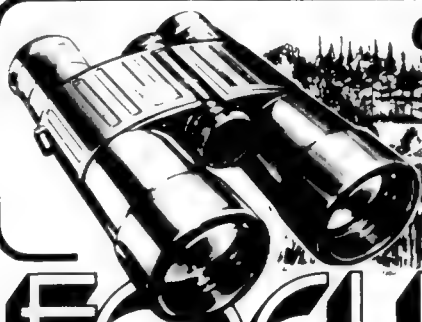
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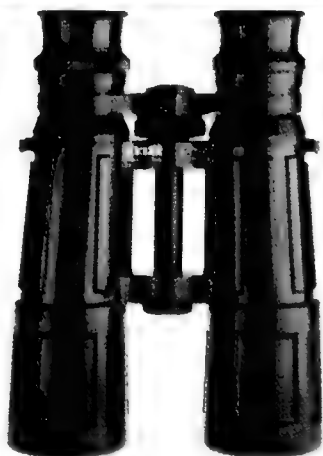


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# British Birds

VOLUME 81 NUMBER 6 JUNE 1988



## The World's first known juvenile Cox's Sandpiper

*P. A. Buckley*

For once, the North Americans have beaten the British by being first to find a spectacular vagrant Asiatic shorebird away from the Alaskan out-islands.<sup>1</sup> This time we outdid everyone, producing a juvenile Cox's Sandpiper *Calidris paramelanotos* in Massachusetts. This individual, depicted in colour in plate 145, is not only the first of this recently described species from the Western Hemisphere, but also only the second away from its Australian wintering grounds (an adult was reported from Hong Kong in spring 1987: *Brit. Birds* 80: 391). The firsts continue, however, for, until this individual, Cox's juvenile plumage was undescribed, and, until this photograph, there have been, to my knowledge, no published colour photographs of Cox's Sandpiper in any plumage, let alone that of a juvenile. I am exceedingly grateful to the bird's discoverer, Mark Kasprzyk, for much background information, and to Simon Perkins, for permission to reproduce here his splendid colour photograph.

This bird was first mist-netted at night, on 15th September 1987, at Duxbury Beach, a long barrier spit separating Plymouth Bay (where the *Mayflower* Pilgrims landed in 1620) from Cape Cod Bay/Atlantic Ocean waters. It was ringed as a Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos* (understandable, at 03.00 hours), but photographed in the hand nonetheless, carefully measured, and then released. Nagging identification doubts soon set in, and efforts to relocate the bird were successful by daylight on 15th. Several observers examined it at close range over the next few days, and it went on the Massachusetts rare bird telephone-tape, finally, as an adult

<sup>1</sup> This is actually not the first, truth to tell. An adult Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus* was in Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1978, and a juvenile Far Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis* was in the same general area in 1986. Both individuals were illustrated with black-and-white or colour photos in *American Birds* (32: 1062-1064; 40: 13-15).



145. World's first known juvenile Cox's Sandpiper *Calidris paramelanotos*, Massachusetts, USA, September 1987 (Simon Perkins)

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *C. acuminata* on Friday 18th. Nonetheless, R. A. Forster, a veteran Massachusetts birder who had studied it carefully that day, was, by that evening, already suspecting that it might be a juvenile Cox's, and, over the weekend of 19th/20th, it was scrutinised with this possibility in mind. Finally, late on Monday 21st, default consensus was reached that, indeed, it *had to be* a juvenile Cox's—no mean feat, given the species' rarity and that its juvenile plumage had never been described.

The word went out that night, and by Tuesday 22nd quite a crowd had assembled, but the large numbers of sandpipers that the Cox's had been consorting with were nowhere in evidence. Most observers left, disappointed, by early afternoon—too soon, it turned out, for one persistent stalker saw the bird well later that day. That was its last observation.

A detailed analysis of this bird's plumage, to be compared with that of another juvenile reported from Australia also last autumn, is in preparation by the discoverers. Likewise, a complete history of this fascinating taxon is also in preparation, and one or both papers will be illustrated with photographs of this and possibly other individuals.

The purpose of this account (besides simple gloating) is to alert British and European observers to Cox's Sandpiper's potential occurrence, and to indicate what field marks one ought to be looking for. Clearly, the bird is in the Pectoral/Sharp-tailed assemblage. Clearly, too, it shares features of

both, yet is distinctive in its own right. It is not hard to see from plate 145 why its first Australian observers thought 'odd Dunlin' *C. alpina*. On closer inspection, though, one is given the impression of two separate species: the bill and perhaps head of a Dunlin<sup>2</sup> (or even a hint of Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* from bill 'kink' and slight double supercilium), coupled to the body of, say, a juvenile Pectoral. It would seem that, apart from size—it appeared bulkier than Pectoral—its most striking on-ground feature is the all-dark, long (35 mm or more) decurved bill, while in flight the extensive white sides to the uppertail-coverts are reminiscent of Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*.

Wing-covert differences, useful in separating Little Stint *C. minuta* from Red-necked Stint *C. ruficollis*, might also prove helpful here: on Cox's they appear to be dark-centred light-brown, edged white, whereas those of fresh Pectorals are usually grey-brown or rich dark-brown, fringed buffish or off-white, and of Sharp-tailed a quite similar two-toned brown, edged whitish. In this regard, Cox's is more like Sharp-tailed, although its back coloration, and especially dull white nape, are more like Pectoral. The tertials show buffy inner and white outer margins, resembling those of Sharp-tailed, but in their colour, intensity and spread (subdued, not strikingly orange, brown and white) are more like Pectoral. Cox's buffy breast, strongly brown-streaked but irregularly bordered below (not evident in plate 145) without obvious continuation down the sides, is more like Pectoral, but this character combination might prove distinctive. Some literature references to a streaked crissum (vent and undertail-coverts), *à la* Sharp-tailed, are not supported by this photograph, and I am not aware of its being mentioned by any who saw it. In this respect, it is also similar to Pectoral. Most observers believed it appeared bulkier and longer-legged than Pectoral or Sharp-tailed, and if there was one feature instantly setting it apart from both of those species it was the quite long, decurved, all-dark bill. Legs were more Sharp-tailed 'dirty-greenish' coloured, and the cap was closer in shade and extent to Pectoral, although lacking the rich rufous tones both other species typically show as juveniles. The indistinct main supercilium was fainter, fore and aft, than on the other species, and the buffy-orange ear-coverts, somewhat like a Western Sandpiper *C. mauri* in breeding dress, might conceivably be typical of all Cox's plumages, to judge from plate 82 in Hayman *et al.*'s (1986) nonpareil book. No-one seems to have noticed, or commented upon, the underwing pattern, which can be used to separate Pectoral and Sharp-tailed.

A few additional features of this and one of the Australian Cox's (black-and-white photographs in Cox 1987) deserve mention, even if only tentatively at this stage: (1) Cox's tarsus is absolutely longer than that of Pectoral, and in photographs the knee is very close to the belly feathering, accentuating the long-tarsused look; (2) Cox's forehead is steep, giving a round-headed look in contrast to the flat-headed jizz of Pectoral and.

<sup>2</sup> Comparison here is with the two North American races of Dunlin, which generally have longer and more uniformly decurved bills than do the Dunlins most frequently observed in Western Europe.

especially, Sharp-tailed; (3) Cox's bill seems finer than Pectoral (nearest to Cox's in bill length), possibly because it (usually) lacks the pale bill base of Pectoral, or because it is finer, or because its bill proportions are different; (4) the white Vs on the scapulars of this juvenile Cox's are weaker than those on most Pectorals, but how consistent a character this is remains to be seen; (5) Cox's lower scapulars (below the lower white V) seem to have lighter proximal bases contrasting with darker distal halves, giving a mottled or dappled effect, usually not apparent on Pectorals, although I have a photograph of a fresh juvenile Pectoral approaching it; (6) Cox's at-rest jizz is that of an extremely pointed-winged bird, very much like Baird's Sandpiper *C. bairdii* or White-rumped Sandpiper *C. fuscicollis*, and less like Pectoral or Sharp-tailed in that respect; this effect is especially striking in the photographs in Cox's (1987) paper.

There are two further identification complications with plate 82 in Hayman *et al.* (1986), which is both the World's standard for shorebird identification as well as the only readily accessible source of colour plates of Cox's Sandpiper. As Cox (1987) pointed out, bird 201b is labelled Cox's Sandpiper when in fact it seems to be a Pectoral, and I call readers' attention to the vignette of three heads in the lower left of the same plate: the Sharp-tailed is a juvenile, the Pectoral would seem to be a worn winter adult, as may also be the Cox's. Alas, none of the three birds is aged in the accompanying caption. More substantive information on the identification of Cox's Sandpiper must await new data, corrected colour plates, and new colour photographs of a selection of individuals in various plumages.

Now, just what is Cox's Sandpiper? One thing it seems not to be is Cooper's Sandpiper, *C. cooperi*, known from the unique type taken on Long Island, New York, in May 1833 (Ridgway 1919; American Ornithologists' Union 1983), and at first blush possibly *paramelanotos*. I am told, however, that the holotype and paratype of *paramelanotos* were compared directly with *cooperi* at the Smithsonian Institution, with identity being ruled out (R. B. Clapp, verbally).

It has been suggested here and there that *paramelanotos* represents not a relict species, but a 'stereotyped hybrid' (*sic*), between perhaps Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea*, although there is no consensus on the likely parentage if in fact it is a hybrid. Comparison of juveniles of the several candidate *Calidris* species (e.g. from plates in Hayman *et al.* 1986) indicates that Cox's is quite similar to Pectoral, less so to Sharp-tailed, and utterly unlike Curlew Sandpiper. In fact, Cox's is much more similar in both juvenile *and* adult plumages to White-rumped Sandpiper than to Curlew Sandpiper, a resemblance that seems so far to have escaped comment. Obviously, White-rumped also has a white 'rump', one of the features that suggested Curlew Sandpiper as a possible 'hybrid parent' in the first place. And if the two Cox's type specimens are correctly sexed, the male is noticeably larger than the female in all dimensions, as Pectoral but exactly opposite to Curlew Sandpiper; male and female White-rumped Sandpipers are essentially the same size.

There is an even better reason for rejecting the 'stereotyped hybrid' notion: most, if not all, valid bird species differ in so many genes or alleles

(Buckley 1982; Corbin 1987) that hybrid combinations are extraordinarily variable. The effects of independent assortment and random recombination manifest themselves anew in each hybrid individual, the very antithesis of stereotypy. Thus, hybrid origin seems a most implausible explanation for the relatively consistent external morphology exhibited by the Cox's Sandpipers reported to date. One could even argue that, in several features, Cox's is more distinctive than many stints and peeps, dowitchers *Limnodromus*, and so on. Although taxonomically nameable geographic variation has not been widespread in the evolution of small waders, one cannot dismiss the possibility that Cox's Sandpiper is merely a recently recognised race of an already known species; but which one? Critical resolution of this question must await biochemical analyses of its allozymic, cryptic genetic variation, and eventually sequencing of its DNA, relative to any putative parental or conspecific species. My prediction is that Cox's Sandpiper will prove to be a valid, overlooked, Siberian-breeding *Calidris*, one of those relicts in the same group as Asiatic Dowitcher *L. semipalmatus*, Little Curlew *Numenius minutus*, Slender-billed Curlew *N. tenuirostris*, Spoon-billed Sandpiper and Nordmann's Green-shank *Tringa guttifer*. What we do know now is that, having occurred at least once in eastern North America in autumn, it is fair game anywhere in Europe.

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# Pollutants in Merlin eggs and their effects on breeding



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**I**n view of the declining status of the Merlin *Falco columbarius* in Britain (Bibby & Nattrass 1986; Newton *et al.* 1986), we have continued to analyse unhatched eggs for pollutant residues. The findings from eggs collected to 1980 were given in Newton *et al.* (1982), and in this paper we summarise the results obtained to 1986 and re-examine some aspects on the enlarged samples. The chemicals involved include DDE (from the insecticide DDT), HEOD (from the insecticides aldrin and dieldrin), PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls from industrial products) and mercury (mainly from agricultural and industrial sources). We demonstrate for the first time a relationship between breeding success and mercury levels in eggs.

As in previous studies, the eggs were collected by observers in different parts of Britain, and sent to Monks Wood Experimental Station for analysis. Most such eggs were either addled or deserted. They were thus not a random cross-section of those laid, but the same sampling method was used throughout. Organochlorine residues were calculated as parts per million (ppm) in egg lipid, and mercury as ppm in dry weight. Shell-indices, reflecting shell thickness, were calculated as shell weight (mg)/shell length  $\times$  breadth (mm) (Ratcliffe 1967). To find whether residues affected breeding success, we looked for relationships between residue levels in eggs from particular nests and the number of young produced in those nests. In total, eggs from 173 nests were examined during 1964-86, but the results from no more than one egg per clutch were used in any of the following calculations (see Newton *et al.* 1982 for further details of procedure). The mean lipid content of Merlin eggs was 6.2% and the mean dry matter was 20.0%. The organochlorine values given below could, therefore, be converted to a fresh weight basis by dividing them by 17, and the mercury values by dividing them by 5.

## Results

The Merlin remains the most heavily contaminated of the British raptors. The eggs examined during 1981-86 had geometric mean levels of about 100 ppm DDE, 5 ppm HEOD and 50 ppm PCBs in lipid, and 2 ppm mercury in dry weight. These levels were considerably higher than those in contemporary eggs of the Peregrine *F. peregrinus* from the same regions (fig. 1). The two species share much the same habitat, and both eat birds. Relative to their body weights, however, the smaller Merlin has a greater daily food intake than the Peregrine, and this could at least partly explain the difference in residue burdens.

The mean shell-index of Merlin eggs obtained in 1981-86 was  $1.102 \pm 0.010$ , some 12% less than the pre-DDT value of 1.256.

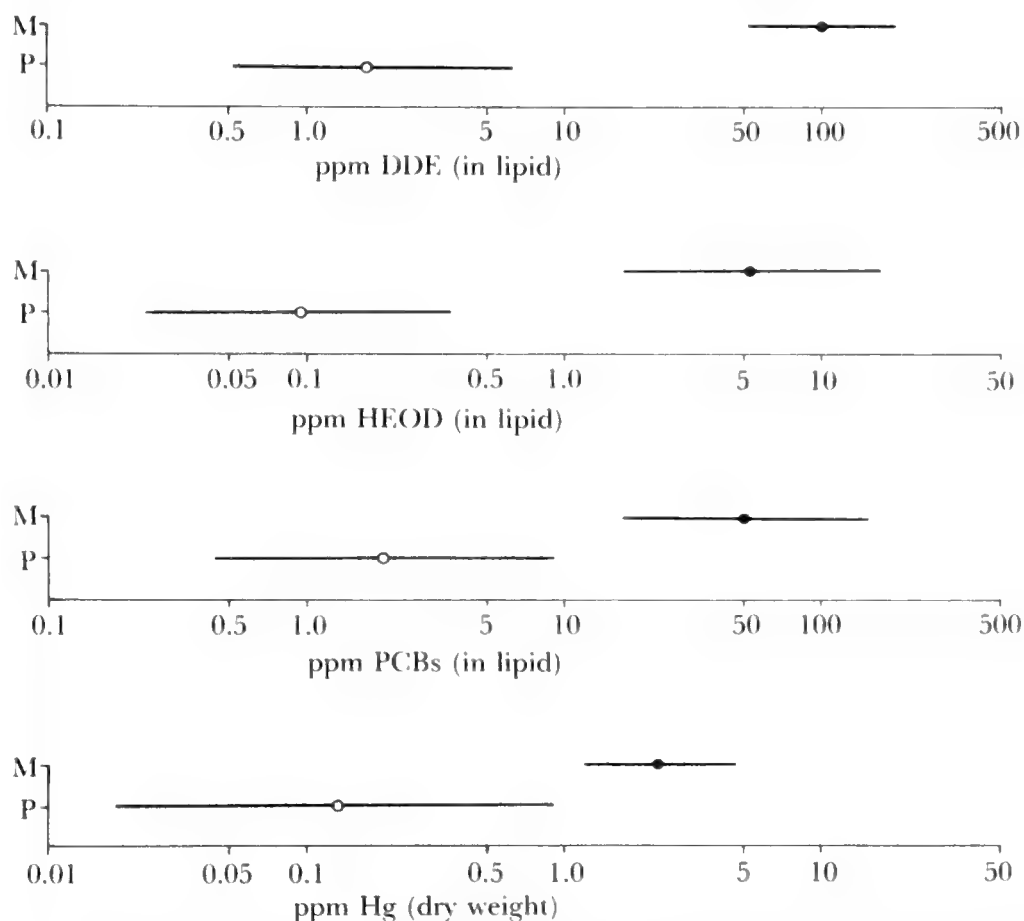


Fig. 1. Comparison of pollutant levels in eggs of Merlins *Falco columbarius* (M) and Peregrines *F. peregrinus* (P) collected in Britain during 1981-86. The figures show geometric mean levels and standard deviations, based on 122 eggs of Merlin and 189 of Peregrine

## Geographical patterns in residues

As yet, no Merlin egg examined in Britain has been free of pollutants, and every egg analysed during 1981-86 contained measurable residues of all four chemicals. For each chemical, regional variation was apparent (fig. 2). The pesticides generally tended to be present at lower levels in eggs from the north of Britain than from farther south: DDE levels were lowest in eggs from Orkney and Shetland, and HEOD levels in eggs from Orkney. PCBs showed no obvious north-south trend. Mercury has been measured only since 1980, and the levels in eggs from Orkney and



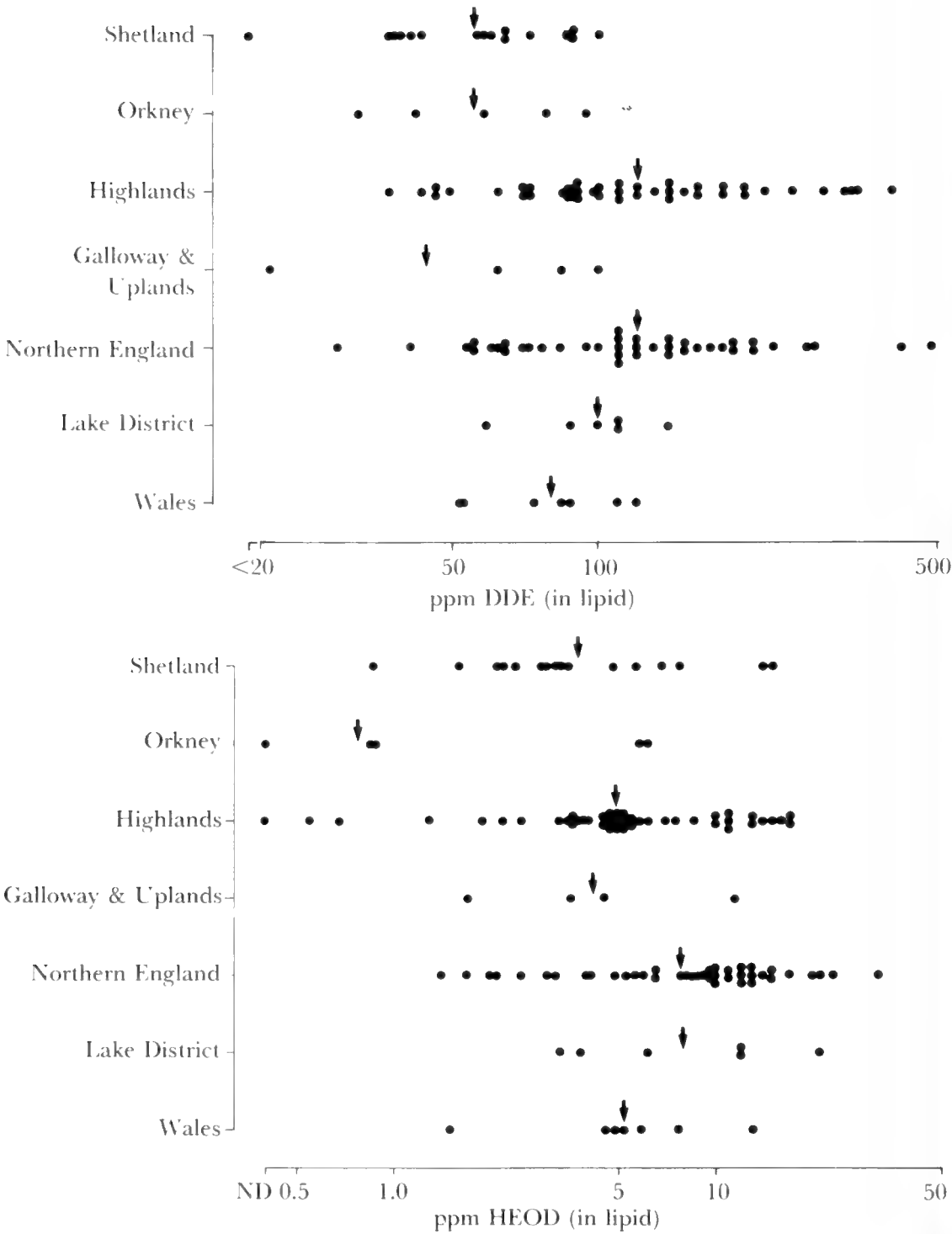
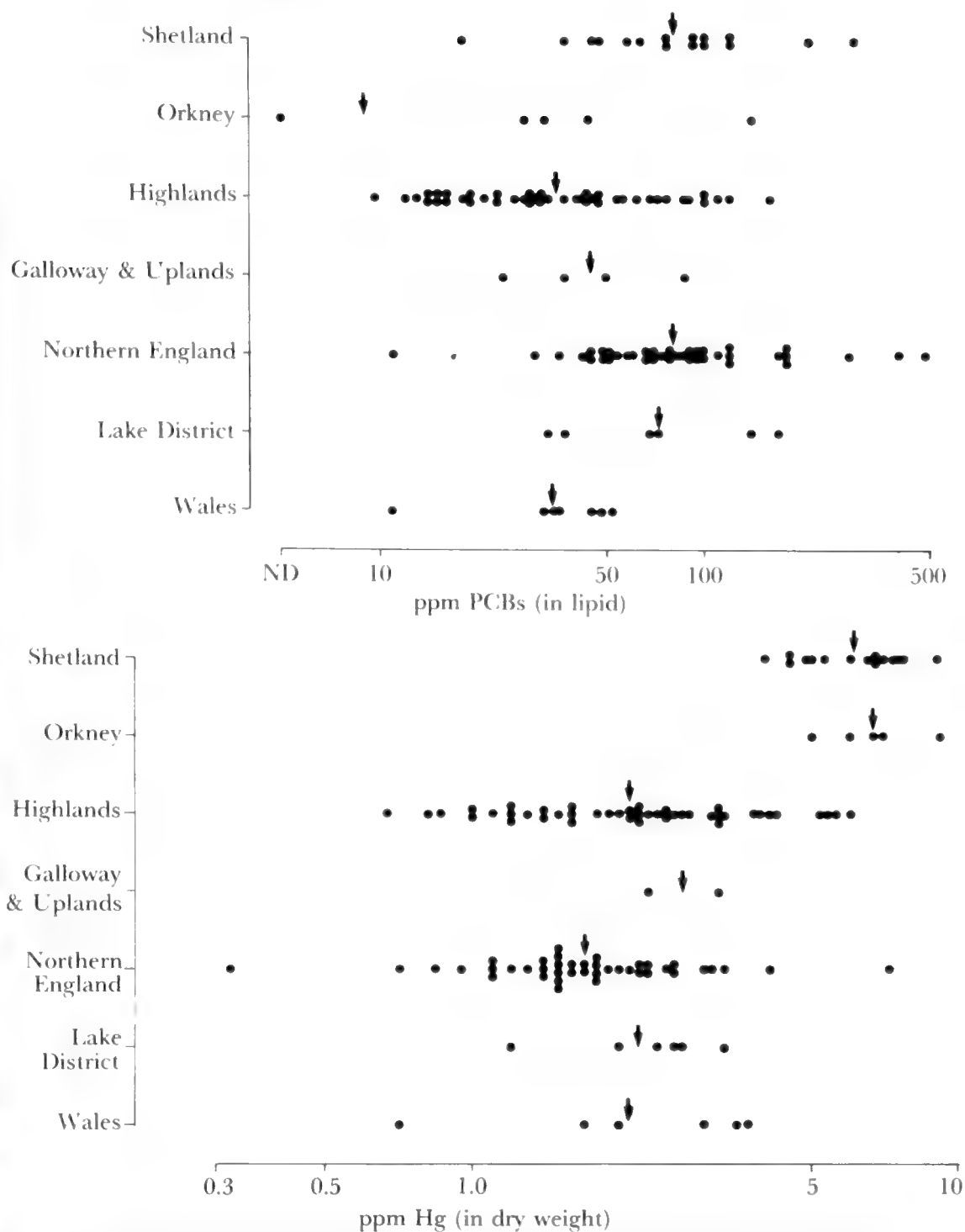


Fig. 2. Pollutant levels in eggs of Merlins *Falco columbarius* from different regions, 1981-88. Variation was found: for DDE,  $F_{6,116} = 5.90, P < 0.0001$ ; for HEOD,  $F_{6,116} = 4.14, P < 0.0001$ .

Shetland were strikingly higher than in those from the rest of Britain. The two eggs obtained from Hebridean islands also had high mercury levels, with 5.0 ppm recorded from Mull and 4.1 ppm from Lewis.

Shell-indices were generally higher in the north of Britain than farther south, as expected from the pattern in DDE, the main causal agent of shell thinning (see later).

Eggs laid by two captive females, fed largely on day-old domestic fowl chicks, had much lower residues than eggs from wild Merlins, with about 1.2 and 1.4 ppm HEOD, 0.9 and 1.6 ppm DDE, 2.2 and 2.3 ppm PCB, and



show position of geometric mean levels. On analysis of variance, significant regional differences were observed for Cu,  $F_{6,116} = 10.41, P < 0.0001$ ; for Pb,  $F_{6,116} = 6.15, P < 0.0001$ ; for Hg,  $F_{6,116} = 16.41, P < 0.0001$ .

0.1 and 0.1 ppm mercury, respectively. These eggs also had shell-indices that were close to the pre-DDT mean, at 1.26. Evidently, the domestic fowl chicks were very much less contaminated than was the wild prey eaten by Merlins.

## Time trends in residues and shell-indices

Since the 1960s, when the first Merlin eggs were analysed, the residues of all three organochlorines have declined significantly (fig. 3). The decline was more marked in HEOD than in DDE and PCBs. Over the same

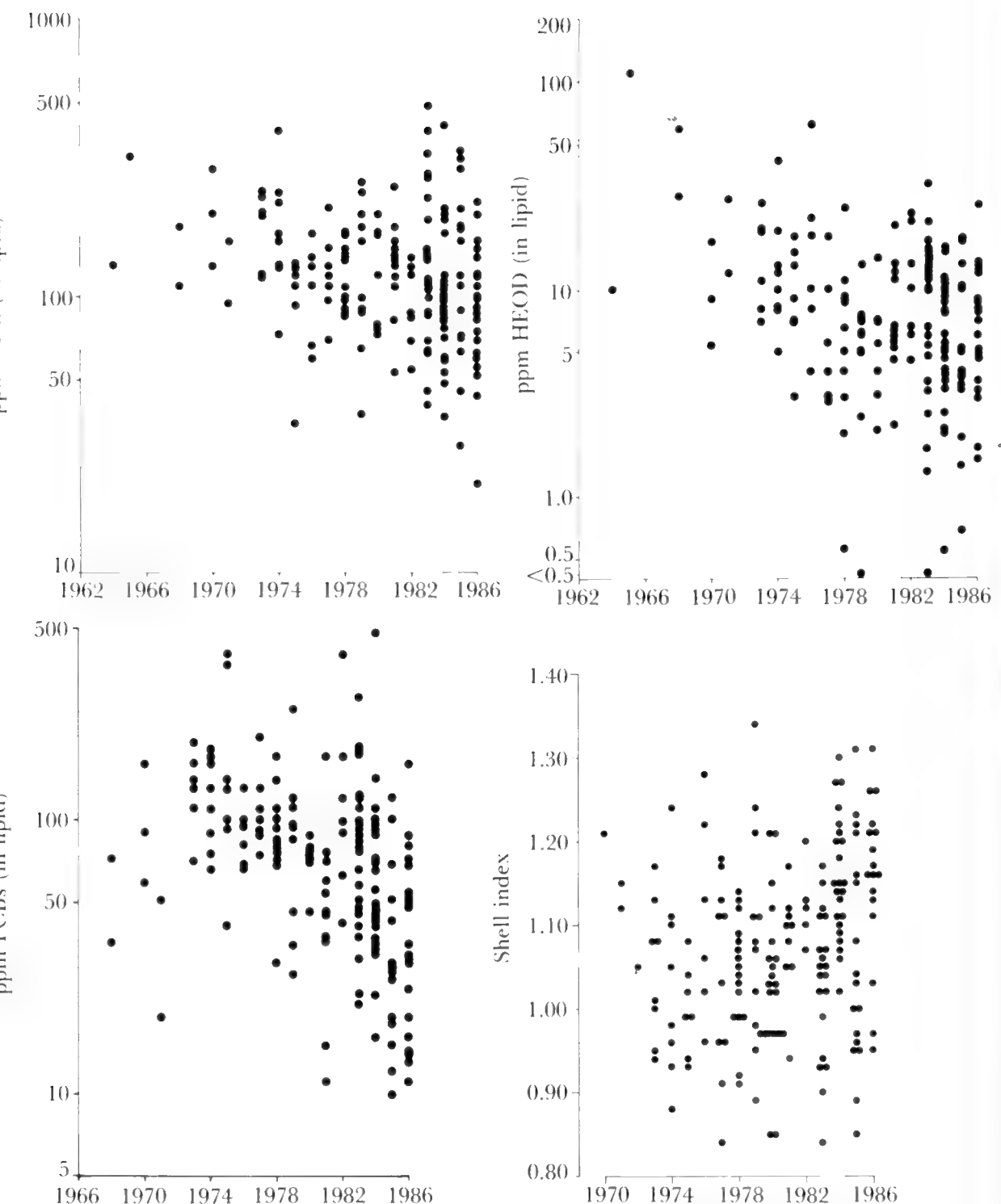


Fig. 3. Time trends in the organochlorine levels and shell-indices of eggs of British Merlins *Falco columbarius* (Orkney and Shetland excluded). On a linear regression of residue level on year, significant declines were found in the levels of all three chemicals: Log DDE =  $2.278 - 0.012 \text{ year}$ ,  $r = 0.24$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ; Log HEOD =  $1.312 - 0.027 \text{ year}$ ,  $r = 0.30$ ,  $P < 0.0001$ ; Log PCB =  $2.305 - 0.028 \text{ year}$ ,  $r = 0.38$ ,  $P < 0.0001$ . During the same period, shell-indices rose: shell-index =  $0.978 + 0.006 \text{ year}$ ,  $r = 0.24$ ,  $P < 0.005$ . In all these equations, 1963 is taken as year 1

period, shell-indices improved. In assessing these national trends, eggs from Orkney and Shetland were excluded, because they had somewhat different residue levels from those in eggs from the rest of the country, and

were represented only in recent years. No trend in mercury was apparent in the short period that levels were measured.

### Significance of residues

The number of young raised by individual Merlin pairs was related to the levels of mercury in their eggs: in general, the more mercury the eggs contained, the less likely were they to produce young. Although significant statistically, this relationship was by no means clear-cut (fig. 4). Some clutches with high mercury levels still managed to produce three or four young, while some other clutches with low levels failed completely (in some cases for reasons other than mercury content). Lack of a clear-cut relationship between residue level and success is common with other types of pollutants (Newton 1979). It results partly because of individual variation in response (as levels which will harm one bird will not affect another), and partly because the effect of a pollutant in eggs may be modified by other variables (such as incubation routines). In general, the data in fig. 4 suggested that productivity fell markedly in clutches where mercury exceeded 3 ppm. Only two out of 18 clutches (11%) with less than 3 ppm mercury failed to produce young, compared with 18 out of 37 (49%) with more than 3 ppm mercury ( $\chi^2 = 5.8$ ,  $P < 0.02$ ).

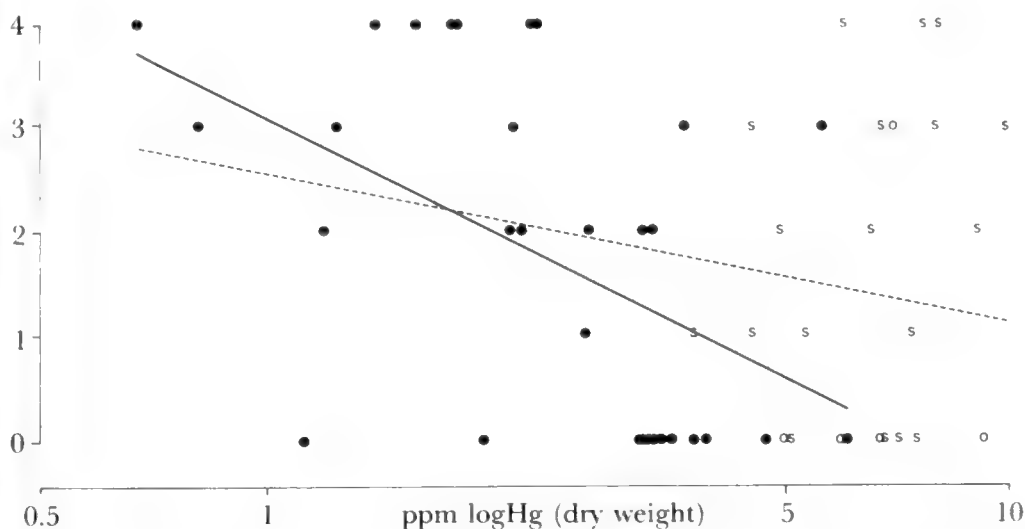


Fig. 4. Number of young raised by individual pairs of Merlins *Falco columbarius* shown in relation to the mercury content of their eggs. Open circles show eggs from Orkney, S eggs from Shetland, and filled circles eggs from elsewhere in Britain. The regression equation, describing the relationship, is as follows, where Pr = the productivity of individual pairs: Pr =  $2.49 - 1.37 \log \text{Hg}$ ,  $r = 0.28$ ,  $N = 55$ ,  $P \leq 0.04$  (broken line above). Excluding the records from Orkney and Shetland the relationship becomes: Pr =  $2.82 - 2.81 \log \text{Hg}$ ,  $r = 0.49$ ,  $N = 32$ ,  $P < 0.005$  (solid line above). For Orkney and Shetland alone, no relationship was apparent

Another complication was that, although the relationship between mercury level and brood-size was marked in mainland Britain (and hence in the complete sample), it was practically non-existent in Orkney and Shetland, where mercury levels were highest. We cannot explain this anomaly, but future work will aim to find whether mercury was present in some less toxic form in the island birds than in the mainland ones. The

chemical analyses done so far measured elemental mercury alone, and did not distinguish the different compounds involved.

In contrast to the findings on mercury, productivity showed no significant relationship with the levels of DDE, HEOD and PCBs in eggs. Moreover, when these chemicals were included in a multiple regression analysis with mercury, they explained no more of the variance in brood size than did mercury alone. In other words, no evidence was found that the organochlorines (at the levels found) had any influence on productivity. This was in line with earlier findings, based on eggs collected in 1971-80 (Newton *et al.* 1982).

As in previous studies (Hodson 1975; Newton *et al.* 1982), shell-indices were negatively correlated with DDE levels. The relationship was linear with DDE on a log scale, and a revised equation based on all available eggs was as follows:

Shell-index =  $1.30 - 0.10 \log \text{DDE}$ ,  $r = 0.31$ ,  $N = 168$ ,  $P < 0.0001$ . Intercept value of 1.30, indicating shell-index with 1 ppm DDE, was close to pre-DDT mean shell-index of 1.26.

Shell-indices showed no significant correlation with HEOD, PCB or mercury. Moreover, when these other chemicals were incorporated in a multiple regression analysis, they explained no more of the variance in shell-index than did DDE alone. This was also in line with previous findings on Merlins and other raptors (Newton 1979; Newton *et al.* 1982), and with experimental evidence implicating DDE as the primary cause of shell thinning (Cooke 1973).

## Discussion

The recent results indicate a continuing widespread contamination of

146. Merlin *Falco columbarius*, Clwyd, June 1973 (Dennis Green)



British Merlins with organochlorine and mercury residues, together with widespread shell thinning. Progressive reductions in the use of DDT, aldrin and dieldrin over the years (Newton & Haas 1984), however, and almost no usage since 1983, seem to have been accompanied by reductions in residues of DDE and HEOD in Merlin eggs and by a slight improvement in shell-indices.

A slower decline of DDE compared with HEOD in the eggs was presumably because DDE is more persistent in the physical and biotic environment than is HEOD, and was also used in quantity until a later date (Cutler 1981; Sly 1981, 1986; Newton & Haas 1984). The continuing high levels of PCBs parallel the situation in British Peregrines and Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* and presumably result because some PCBs are even more persistent than DDE, and their manufacture and use continues.

Interestingly, those Merlins breeding in the Scottish Highlands, where pesticide use has been slight and localised, were as heavily contaminated with organochlorines and mercury as were those from farther south. This was presumably because a large proportion of the Highland Merlins, together with their various prey species, spend the winter in more contaminated areas.

We cannot yet explain the greater levels of mercury found in the Orkney and Shetland eggs. Possibly the Merlins on these islands eat more waders than do Merlins elsewhere, but, if so, this could only be in winter, as it is not apparent in the summer diet, which consists almost entirely of song-birds (E. Meek, D. Okill, unpublished data). Waders generally contain more mercury than do song-birds, presumably because many

147. Merlin *Falco columbarius*, Clwyd, June 1974 (Dennis Green)



species feed on contaminated estuaries. To judge from analyses at Monks Wood Experimental Station, song-birds usually contain less than 1 ppm mercury in their livers (dry weight), whereas waders often contain 1-20 ppm (Parslow 1973; Newton *et al.* in press). Hence, if more of the Merlins from Orkney and Shetland than those from elsewhere winter in coastal districts, they would in general pick up more mercury. Relevant ringing recoveries for migrant Merlins are few and inconclusive on this point (Heavisides 1987), but those Merlins which remain on the islands in winter are mostly seen at the coast.

The relationship between brood size and mercury level was highly significant among eggs from mainland Britain, rather less so in the whole sample, and practically non-existent among the island eggs. We do not know why the island Merlins seemed more resistant to mercury, unless, as mentioned above, they contained mercury in a less toxic form than did the mainland birds. This is a distinct possibility, considering that the use of

148. Merlin *Falco columbarius*, Clwyd, May 1974 (Dennis Green)







149. Merlin *Falco columbarius*, Gwynedd, April 1977 (R. J. Chandler)

organo-mercury in agriculture has been relatively much greater in mainland Britain than on the islands. Interestingly, however, the mercury levels found in Merlin eggs from several regions were within the range found in experiments to reduce the hatchability of the eggs of Pheasants *Phasianus colchicus*. Such levels were recorded as 1.3-2.0 ppm wet weight (= 6.5-10 ppm dry weight) in a Swedish study (Borg *et al.* 1969) and as 0.5-1.5 ppm wet weight (= 2.5-7.5 ppm dry weight) in a Canadian study (Fimreite 1971).

There were probably two reasons why no relationship was found in the complete sample between productivity and either shell-indices or organo-chlorine residue levels. First, the pesticide residues have now become so low that they probably affected at most a small proportion of the Merlins studied; and, secondly, many other factors besides pollutants cause

reductions in productivity. These other factors were not usually known to us, so we could not take them into account in the analysis. Thus, the lack of a significant relationship between productivity and organochlorine levels cannot be taken to indicate that British Merlins are now free of the adverse effects of these chemicals. It does indicate, however, that these pollutants are no longer paramount in determining nest success in the areas involved. Any influence the organochlorines might have is outweighed by that of other factors, including mercury in part of the population.

It is premature to say whether mercury has been involved in the decline of Merlin populations. In Northumbria and part of Wales, decline in numbers coincided with decline in breeding success (Roberts & Green 1983; Newton *et al.* 1986), but in these areas mean mercury levels were not especially high. In Orkney, both numbers and breeding success have fallen within the last ten years (E. Meek *in litt.*), but in Shetland they apparently have not (D. Okill *in litt.*). Clearly, more information is desirable, and not only from Orkney and Shetland.

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### Summary

1. British Merlins *Falco columbarius* have continued to show widespread contamination with organochlorine pesticides, PCBs and mercury. Shell thinning was also widespread.
2. On a national scale, organochlorine residues in eggs declined during the period 1964-86, and shell-indices improved.
3. Geographical variation was apparent in the egg residues of all the chemicals examined, and eggs from Orkney and Shetland contained much more mercury than did those from elsewhere.
4. The number of young raised by breeding Merlins was inversely related to the levels of mercury in their eggs. This finding was new and unexpected, but it was apparent only in eggs from mainland Britain, not in those from Orkney and Shetland, where mercury levels were highest. In general, organochlorines had no obvious influence on nest success. This was partly because organochlorine levels in most eggs were too low in the years concerned, and probably also because other factors (including mercury in some regions) had much greater influence on success.

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## Habitat preferences and prey of Merlins in winter



*R. C. Dickson*

**S**exual dimorphism in size of adult Merlins *Falco columbarius* is marked, the blue-mantled males weighing about 24-30% less than the brown females (Cramp & Simmons 1980; Dr C. J. Bibby *in litt.*). First-years of both sexes are brown, like adult females. Although males are smaller, there is little published information on any habitat preferences of 'blue'

and ‘brown’ Merlins in winter. This paper summarises observations on habitat and prey choice of Merlins wintering in West Galloway, Scotland, during 1965-84. The results are, of course, difficult to interpret, since a split into blue and brown individuals separates them neither by age nor by sex.

Methods

The Merlin’s small size and low, fast flight make it notoriously elusive in winter. Nevertheless, between 1965 and 1984, I recorded all Merlins seen from September to March and noted their plumage and habitat, hunting methods and choice of prey where this was possible. In February 1970, a small communal roost was found which held up to five Merlins (Dickson 1973); direct observation indicated that the Merlins hunted over the surrounding countryside, using this roost as a base. No sightings are included of Merlins obviously on their way directly to or from the roost.

Table 1. Numbers of ‘blue’ and ‘brown’ Merlins *Falco columbarius* seen in winter in different habitats in West Galloway, 1965-84

χ<sup>2</sup> non-significant (2.31; 3df)

Area	Habitat	Blue (%)	Brown (%)	Totals
Upland	Rolling moorland and sheepwalk	8 (13.3%)	29 (10.9%)	37
Lowland: farmland	Low-lying pastureland, cultivation	25 (41.6%)	91 (34.3%)	116
Lowland: ‘marginal’	Rough pasture, rushy areas	16 (26.6%)	100 (37.7%)	116
Coast	Merse, cliffs, estuaries	10 (16.6%)	43 (16.2%)	53
Other	Rail lines, conifer forest, urban	1 (1.6%)	2 (0.8%)	3
TOTALS		60	265	325

Results

Habitat preferences

Table 1 shows 325 diurnal sightings of Merlins according to habitat and plumage characteristics. The majority of sightings of both plumage classes were in farmland and ‘marginal’ areas, with fewer in coastal or upland localities. It would seem that blue and brown Merlins are distributed equally across all habitats and do not differ in their habitat choice in winter (table 2).

Hunting methods

Merlins employ a wide variety of hunting techniques, facilitating the

Table 2. Seasonal changes (Sept-Mar) in preferred habitats of ‘blue’ and ‘brown’ Merlins *Falco columbarius* in winter in West Galloway, 1965-84

NO. OF SIGHTINGS

Area	Habitat	Sept-Nov		Dec-Jan		Feb-Mar		Totals
		Blue	Brown	Blue	Brown	Blue	Brown	
Upland	Sheepwalk/moorland	3	13	0	9	5	7	37
Lowland	Farmland/cultivation	6	50	10	23	8	19	116
Lowland	‘Marginal’	6	34	6	33	4	33	116
Coast	Merse/cliffs/estuaries	4	29	2	7	4	7	53
Other	Rail lines/forest/urban	0	1	1	0	0	1	3
TOTAL SIGHTINGS		19	127	19	72	21	67	325

exploitation of a wide range of prey species. In this study, the most characteristic methods included: fast, low-level, direct flight less than 1 m above the ground; ‘still-hunting’ from various perches (see below); and searching from high above the ground (table 3). Prolonged chases were seldom recorded. If the initial attack failed, the Merlin would sometimes fly away or land on a perch, but at other times it doggedly pursued prey, twisting and turning, and swooping at it (‘tail-chasing’). Some intended victims escaped by rejoining a flock or diving into cover, but on three occasions Merlins were seen crash-diving into hedges after prey, once successfully. Four observed hunts involved two Merlins. On some occasions, hunts combined two or all three methods.

In California, Page & Whitacre (1975) recorded 343 attacks by a female Merlin, of which 278 (81%) were directed at quarry initially on the ground. Rudebeck (1951) also recorded this method, although, in Hampshire, Ash (1960) never saw Merlins attempt to kill on the ground. In the present study, Merlins were seen to ‘pounce’ to the ground five times, once capturing a Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* and once clutching unsuccessfully at a Redshank *Tringa totanus*; they have also been seen apparently stalking prey on the ground (Dickson 1979).

Merlins landed on and hunted from various perches, including fence posts, bushes or trees, telegraph and electricity poles, straw bales, dykes, grass/heather tufts, and on the ground. The length of time perched varied from a few seconds to 62 minutes (mean 8.5 minutes).

**Table 3. Observation frequency of hunting methods of Merlins *Falco columbarius* (all classes) in winter in West Galloway, 1965-84**  
See text for description of methods

Hunting method	No. of observations (%)	
Low flight	116	(49%)
‘Still hunting’	77	(32%)
From height	44	(19%)

*Choice of prey*

When Merlins were seen hunting avian prey, the species was identified and scored accordingly (table 4). All such birds recorded were species usually associated with low ground and open country in winter. Skylark *Alauda arvensis* was the species most often attacked, followed by Starling, finches (Fringillidae) and Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*. A significant association of prey size with each Merlin class (blue or brown) could be inferred: blue Merlins tried to take large birds on only two out of 19 attempts, while brown Merlins showed a far less obvious bias in size selection. This probably indicates a considerable difference by sex, although the alternative explanation that adult males take smaller prey than do first-years can only be dismissed as being less likely rather than disproved.

*Interspecific relations*

Marked aggression towards other bird species was shown by both sexes of

**Table 4. Percentage frequency of avian prey species in observed hunts by 'blue' and 'brown' Merlins *Falco columbarius* in winter in West Galloway, 1965-84**

Prey species	No. attacks by blue		No. attacks by brown		~		SUCCESS	
	Merlins	% frequency	Merlins	% frequency	blue	brown	blue+brown	DOUBTFUL
Waders <sup>1</sup>	—	—	10	10.5	—	2	—	
Thrushes <sup>2</sup>	1	5.3	3	3.2	1	1	—	
Starling <i>Stumus vulgaris</i>	1	5.3	17	17.9	—	4	—	
Skylark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>	4	21.0	20	21.0	—	—	2	
Finches <sup>3</sup>	6	31.6	11	11.6	—	—	1	
Meadow Pipit <i>Anthus pratensis</i>	1	5.3	11	11.6	—	2	1	
Others <sup>4</sup>	2	10.5	7	7.4	—	1	—	
Unidentified small passerines	4	21.0	16	16.8	1	—	2	
TOTALS	19		95		2	10	6	

1. Includes Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, Dunlin *Calidris alpina*, Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* and Redshank *Tringa totanus*

2. Includes Redwing *Turdus iliacus* and Blackbird *T. merula*

3. Includes Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*, Redpoll *C. flammea*, Linnet *C. cannabina* and Twite *C. flavirostris*

4. Includes Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*, Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* and House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Merlins on restricted home ranges in southern England, where Magpies *Pica pica*, Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* and Short-eared Owls *Asio flammeus* were attacked (Cramp & Simmons 1980). In Galloway, seven other predators hunted in the study area, but most aerial conflicts observed were between Merlins and Carrion Crows or Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus*. Hen Harriers also wintered in the area, using the same roosting area and feeding to a large extent on small birds (Watson & Dickson 1972; Watson 1977; personal observations), and sometimes hunting regularly over the same ground as Merlins. These two species may, therefore, compete for the same prey species, but this was not determined. On eight occasions, however, Merlins were seen in attendance on hunting Hen Harriers (Dickson 1984); Watson (1977) and Cudworth & Massingham (1986) suggested that such an association could be mutually advantageous in locating prey.

## Discussion

Since an equal amount of observation time was spent in all habitats, the differences in preferred habitat (table 2) are probably real. The roost was located in low-lying ground adjacent to the coast, but Merlins leaving the roost normally flew inland and only infrequently to the coast. It is generally stated that Merlins winter in coastal habitats, but this probably reflects observer coverage and the fact that Merlins are relatively more conspicuous in this habitat. There were also fewer sightings of Merlins in moorland habitats, where some of their prey species remain in winter. Merlins would, however, have to feed not only better on moorland, but better by a difference of at least the energy equivalent of the round flight

to and from their roost; otherwise it would be more efficient for them to remain on low ground where prey species are plentiful.

More study is needed of the winter prey of Merlins, but the small sample of observations of birds attacked suggests that the winter diet of Merlins corresponds largely with that in summer. Published results from breeding-season studies show that Merlins take a wide variety of avian prey: in Northumberland, 82% consisted of species weighing less than 50 g and 67% of species weighing less than 30 g (Newton *et al.* 1978). From further study in Northumbria, Skylarks figured prominently as prey in the breeding season (Newton *et al.* 1984), as they did in Galloway (Watson 1979; personal observations), but they did not feature largely as winter prey (although they were the species most commonly attacked). The heaviest winter prey in Galloway was an adult Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* (about 190 g) taken by a brown Merlin, which compares with the heaviest breeding-season prey in Northumbria, which were grouse *Lagopus*, pigeons *Columba*, Lapwing and Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* (up to 300 g). The heaviest winter prey taken by a blue Merlin in Galloway was a male Blackbird *Turdus merula* (about 100 g), which compares with Fieldfare *T. pilaris* (100-120 g) from the Northumbria breeding study.

In conclusion, male and female Merlins would appear to take prey of different sizes in winter (as they do also in summer: Newton *et al.* 1984), but they do not segregate by gross habitat as a result. This is perhaps not surprising, as small birds such as finches may congregate on coasts and large species such as thrushes and Starlings are common enough to replace waders as potential prey for inland females. This study demonstrates that both blue and brown Merlins winter on farmland and 'marginal' areas, rather than in upland or coastal habitats.

## Acknowledgments

I should like to thank Dr C. J. Bibby for constructive comments on a draft of this paper.

## Summary

All Merlins *Falco columbarius* seen in West Galloway in winter during 1965-84 were classed as 'blue' (adult male) or 'brown' (adult female or first-year). The two types were distributed equally across all habitats. Observations suggested that blue and brown Merlins take prey of different sizes in winter. Many Merlins wintered in lowland habitats, particularly farmland and 'marginal' areas, where they fed largely on small birds.

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## Urban Merlins in Canada

Paul C. James

Recent concern over the plight of the Merlin *Falco columbarius* in Britain (Bibby & Nattrass 1986) prompted me to write this short report on the Merlin's current status in Canada, where some interesting developments have recently occurred. Four subspecies of Merlins are recognised in Canada (Godfrey 1986): the eastern forest *columbarius*, the western forest *bendirei*, the west coast *suckleyi*, and the prairie *richardsonii*. As with Merlins elsewhere in the 1960s and 1970s, concern was expressed over their status in Canada, particularly the prairie-inhabiting *richardsonii* (Godfrey 1970). The apparent population decline of this race was attributed to a combination of habitat loss and organochlorine pesticides (Fox 1971; Fyfe *et al.* 1976). Over the last few years, however, these Merlins have colonised urban centres on the Canadian prairies for breeding and wintering purposes (Oliphant & Haug 1985; James *et al.* 1987b). In the city of Saskatoon, for example, the breeding Merlin population has increased from one pair in 1971 to 27 pairs in 1987. This particular population has already achieved the highest recorded nesting density for this species (Oliphant & Haug 1985). Similar urban populations exist in Regina, Moose Jaw, Calgary, and Edmonton, and it is now not uncommon to see Merlins nesting in parks, cemeteries, and schoolyards in the many small grain towns of the prairies. Taken together, this new urban population probably numbers hundreds of pairs, and is still increasing.

The cause for this remarkably successful colonisation is probably related to the appearance of urban-breeding American Crows *Corvus brachyrhynchos* and Black-billed Magpies *Pica pica*, which have provided nests for the Merlins (Houston 1977). These in turn were attracted to the cities by the maturation of the many trees planted over the years. Coupled with the availability of nests are the high densities of prey, especially House Sparrows *Passer domesticus*, that exist in these cities. Studies of the food habits of urban Merlins have shown that they feed predominantly on House Sparrows (Oliphant & McTaggart 1977; James & Smith 1988). This is in sharp contrast to the Merlins breeding in the rural areas of the prairies, where the prey is mainly native grassland songbirds (Hodson 1978). Feeding on House Sparrows has also permitted Merlins to winter in increasing numbers in the cities (James *et al.* 1987b), often under

extremely adverse weather conditions (temperatures in Regina and Saskatoon can get down to  $-35^{\circ}\text{C}$  or lower). The large planted conifers may also play a role, as the Merlins use these for roosting in winter.

Other features of urban Merlin biology contrast with those in rural areas. For example, the urban Merlins enjoy a higher breeding success (Oliphant 1985), are less migratory (James *et al.* 1987b), and use crow nests in conifers rather than magpie nests in deciduous trees. The extreme densities of urban Merlins may also be having some interesting demographic consequences; it was recently shown that they occasionally have non-breeding helpers at the nest (James & Oliphant 1986), and one case of close in-breeding has also been detected (James *et al.* 1987a). One of the most striking differences

between the urban and rural Merlins, however, is their reaction to human intrusion. In my work in Saskatoon, it is not unusual to come across people who are surprised to learn that they have a pair of Merlins nesting in their back garden. This is quite different from rural birds, which will often chatter loudly at the appearance of a human being, even at a considerable distance. It is not surprising that the city birds are less belligerent than their country cousins. They would be doing little else if they reacted to every human being that passed by their nest trees. While a few people do express concern about the noise that the Merlins make and their depredations on the songbirds, most seem to accept them as part of the urban landscape. One or two Merlins are illegally shot each year, but this is of no consequence to their numbers.

The Merlins in the city of Regina are of particular interest because they were introduced there in 1979. Six young Merlins were released in an attempt to establish a breeding population, and they currently number about ten to 12 pairs. With the predicament that the species is facing in Britain, similar urban releases may be a way of helping to secure its future there.

While urban Merlins are now well established on the Canadian prairies, their rural counterparts also seem to be doing well. Unlike those in the cities, however, the rural Merlins require some natural grasslands in proximity to their nests. They are not, for example, found in extensive wheat-growing areas. While no official counts have been made, it is likely

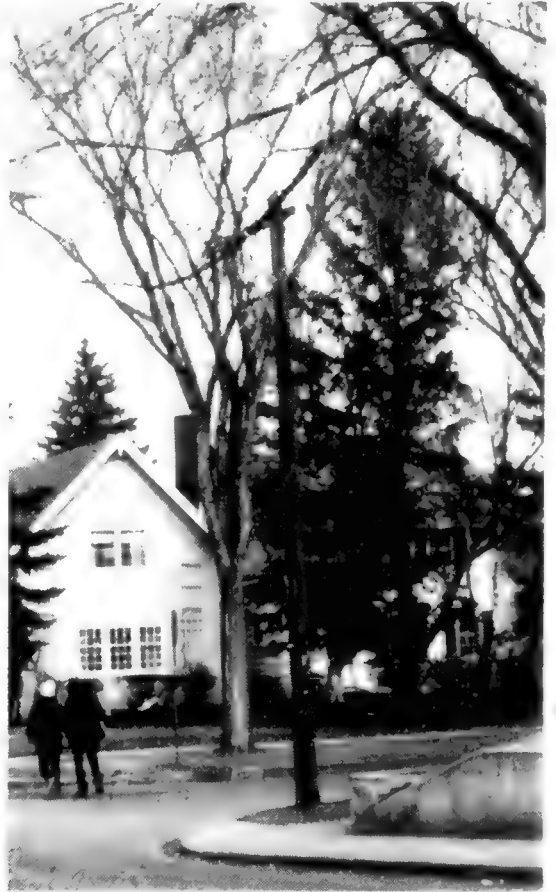


150. Merlin *Falco columbarius*, Saskatoon, Canada, March 1981 (Lynn Oliphant)



151. Merlin *Falco columbarius*, Saskatoon, Canada, March 1981 (Lynn Oliphant)

152. Nest site of Merlin *Falco columbarius*, in large spruce *Picea* to right of telegraph pole, Saskatoon, Canada, March 1982 (Lynn Oliphant)



that the total population of prairie Merlins, both rural and urban, numbers thousands of pairs. Canada's other races of Merlin also appear to be doing well, if Christmas Bird Counts in the USA are anything to go by. All in all, the future seems assured for this exciting little falcon.

### Summary

Merlins *Falco columbarius* have recently colonised several cities in the Canadian prairies, where they nest mostly in the old nests of crows in mature, planted conifers. These urban Merlins nest at high densities, have a high breeding success and are not disturbed by normal human activities. In one area (Regina), an urban Merlin population has been established by introduction.

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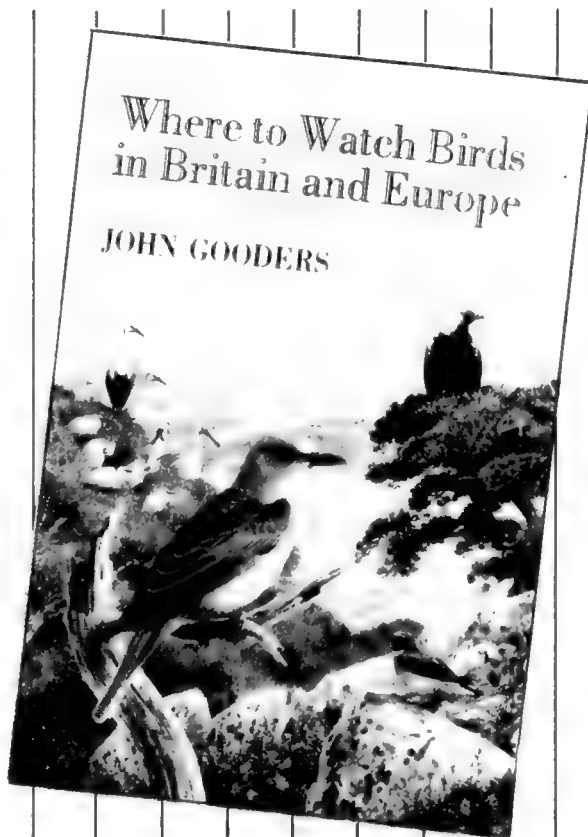
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Dr Paul C. James, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Wascana Park, Regina,  
Saskatchewan, Canada, S4P3V7

## Product reports

Items included in this feature have been submitted by the manufacturers or their agents. The reviews are the personal opinions of the reviewers; they are not the result of technical tests, but are assessments made after use in appropriate conditions (e.g. in the field). Neither *British Birds* nor the individual reviewers can accept responsibility for any adverse consequences of opinions stated, and items are accepted for review on this understanding. We aim, however, to be helpful both to our readers and to the manufacturers of goods used by birdwatchers. EDS

### AICO International 'Jason Sound Amplifier'

AICO International, who declare that they have been in the 'quality binocular' trade for over 20 years, also state in their leaflet that they have now introduced to the market the 'Jason Sound Amplifier' 'aimed directly



at their birdwatching customers'. It would probably be as well if you duck this one, as there is virtually nothing about this gadget which could be of use in the field, though you might manage to listen in on secretive twitchers at 'Nancy's'.

The suggestion is that the slim 18-cm gun microphone can 'easily be fitted to a pair of binoculars and, when pointed in the same direction as the binoculars, will amplify the sounds of the bird or birds being viewed . . .'. The problem is that there must be few models of binocular to which the male screw mount on the microphone-box could be fitted. Also, lightweight and handy as it may be, the gun is less than one-third of the length needed to achieve any worthwhile directional effect. There is some, but this has to be set against the fact that the gun is picking up sound from behind you as well, something which the human ear is constructed to avoid. Guns also need to be well muffled with a good 2-cm thickness of wind-shield—but who wants that sticking out from their binoculars?—and even that would not shield you from the feed-back. Through this one, a light breeze sounds like a full gale. The single pencil battery seems to provide more than adequate operating power when fresh, but turn the volume above 60% and you will be greeted with a head-splitting squeal from the headset for the very reason that the microphone is only just in front of your nose, far too near to the headphones for safety.

At £49.95 inclusive of VAT, it has to be said that it is priced reasonably enough for what it is, but nowhere near worth that expense for what it achieves. It might be 'aimed' at us, but I can hardly believe it was *designed* for us.

M. J. ROGERS

[If any reader would like further details of this product, please send a SAE to Sandra Barnes, BB Advertising, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.]

## Mystery photographs

**132** This raptor is easily identified as a harrier *Circus* by its long tail and its wing attitude. The dark hood and whitish underwing-coverts suggest that it is an adult male. The pattern of the flight feathers, however, is unlike that of any of the four west Palearctic harrier species (but notice the different colour and pattern of primary number ten). The dark





155 & 156. Unusual male Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* (same individual as plates 134 & 154) showing juvenile flight feathers and adult tail. Note new innermost primary and juvenile primary underwing-coverts (W. S. Clark)



grey breast and the streaked upper belly are like those of Montagu's Harrier *C. pygargus* and unlike those of the other adult male harriers: the underparts of adult male Pallid Harrier *C. macrourus* are almost uniformly light grey, without a dark hood or streaking; Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus* shows the dark hood, but not the belly streaking; and Marsh Harrier *C. aeruginosus* has heavy streaking on the breast and solid rufous on the belly.

The mystery bird, fortunately, was captured. It is a Montagu's Harrier, but appears somewhat different from a typical adult male in that its secondaries are like those of a juvenile. Its innermost primary, freshly moulted, is adult, and all the other primaries are barred and mottled, like



157. Male Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*, Israel, May 1985 (H. S. Clark)

those of some, but not all, juvenile males. The outer six primaries of adult males are completely black; the inner four are white below, with two black bars, and are grey above. The adult male's secondaries are white below, with a grey subterminal band and a black bar visible on the outer ones; their upperside is grey, with a black band visible. Except for the flight feathers, most primary coverts and two tail feathers, all feathers on the mystery bird are adult. It is most likely that, during the previous winter, this individual moulted all its body feathers, many wing-coverts, and all but two of its tail feathers, and had just begun to replace its primaries.

---

158. Mystery photograph 133. Identify the species. Answer next month



This 'almost adult' male Montagu's Harrier is in its second calendar-year and was almost one year old when captured and photographed by me in May 1985 at Eilat, Israel.

W. S. CLARK

4554 Shetland Green Road, Alexandria, Va 22312, USA

## Notes

**The Exe Estuary egret of August 1985** On 21st August 1985, we discovered an egret *Egretta* at the Exe Estuary, Devon. It was a small, wholly white egret with no noticeable plumes. Compared with (memories of) a Little Egret *E. garzetta*, it appeared to be a shade stockier, with a slightly longer and broader bill and a thicker-based neck. It was, however, the bare-part coloration that caught the eye, both bill and legs being much paler than would have been expected on a Little Egret. The bill was brownish at the base, through grey-green to a slate-coloured tip, with the lower mandible being the paler. The bare lores were fleshy. The legs were olive-green, appearing strongly green in bright light, and were noticeably yellower at the rear of the tarsus. The feet were yellow, tinged green. It seemed to us a very clumsy feeder in the muddy creeks, and we considered it an immature based on time of year and its dull bare-part coloration. *BWP* vol. 1, for juvenile Little Egret, gives a brown bill, lead-grey bare lores, black legs and grey-green feet, though some observers have reported juvenile Little Egrets with green legs and feet with black lines down the outside of the tarsus, or the tarsus and tibia (*Brit. Birds* 74: 41; 75: 535). On the basis of structure, feeding behaviour and particularly bare-part coloration, we were undecided, between Little Egret and Western Reef Heron *E. gularis*, as to its identity. Perhaps this adds support to the opinion of James Hancock, co-author of *The Herons Handbook*, who considers Western Reef Heron to be a race of Little Egret.

D. A. COPE and J. CAYFORD

25 Sandringham Drive, Paignton, Devon TQ3 1HU



P. G. Lansdown has commented: 'The bird seen by D. A. Cope and J. Cayford was present at the Exe Estuary from 20th to 30th August 1985, and was accepted by the *British Birds* Rarities Committee as a juvenile Little Egret (*Brit. Birds* 79: 530). It was seen by many observers, including two members of the BBRC, and in none of the available descriptions is mention of the comparatively thick, parallel-sided bill of Western Reef Heron to be found. Observers who submitted notes, and others who were consulted, are in agreement that, on bill structure, the bird was a Little Egret. The initial confusion, and there certainly *was* confusion, with a number of experienced observers at that time considering it to be a Western Reef Heron, was caused by the bare-part coloration. There was quite an array of bare-part colours noted by various observers, in itself an interesting topic: the upper mandible varied in the notes from greyish-horn to grey-yellow, always with an extensive, dark tip and with some observers seeing a dark line along the culmen ridge; the lower mandible varied in the descriptions from pale horn to dull yellow, always

with an extensive, dark tip and always palest and brightest at the base; the bare lores were grey; the legs were generally considered to be dull grey-green, but yellower at the rear, though one observer noted the legs as medium brown; and the feet were variously described as yellow-green, dull orangy-yellow and clean yellow. However these colours are interpreted, they do not add up to the classic 'black bill, black legs and yellow feet' of most field guides, nor to the more detailed bare-part coloration of juvenile Little Egret given in *BWP* vol. 1, as pointed out by D. A. Cope and J. Cayford. This deficiency in the literature, which has resulted in a lack of awareness of the variation in bare-part colours of juvenile Little Egret amongst British observers, created the identification problem. The BBRC considers the bare-part coloration of the Exe Estuary bird to be quite normal for a juvenile Little Egret. It should be noted that Sueur (*Brit. Birds* 75: 535) stated that the green leg-colour of juvenile Little Egret can remain for almost a year, so a Little Egret with non-black legs could be encountered at any time of year.' EDS

**Lesser Crested Tern in Norfolk** On the afternoon of 9th August 1983, I was birdwatching on Blakeney Point, Norfolk, looking for a Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* which had been reported in the area a few days previously. I scanned casually through a group of Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis* resting on the upper beach, and was astonished to see a large tern with a bright orange bill standing amongst them.

By sheer coincidence, just 24 hours earlier I had been reading the latest issue of *British Birds* (that for August 1983), which happened to contain a detailed article describing how an orange-billed tern in South Wales had been misidentified as a Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* when it was, in fact, a Royal Tern *S. maxima* (*Brit. Birds* 76: 335-339). The article pointed out, amongst other things, that Royal Terns could appear much smaller (and therefore much more like Lesser Crested Tern) than previously realised and depicted in the popular field guides. I was determined not to make the same mistake, so I (wrongly as it turned out) called the Blakeney bird a Royal Tern.

I watched it for just a few minutes, getting reasonable views of it perched and in flight, and then hurried off to alert others. Joe Reed, the National Trust's warden, kindly allowed me to use his telephone, and by evening some 40 or so birders had hastened to the site at the very tip of Blakeney Point. Fortunately, the hundreds of Sandwich Tern chicks in the area had just about all fledged, so there was no problem of observers disturbing this sensitive and important breeding colony. Next morning, several hundred birdwatchers arrived: fortunately the bird did not disappoint them. It was seen in the area almost daily up until 17th September, and also appeared briefly at Scolt Head and Holme, farther west along the North Norfolk coast, on 27th and 29th August. Its long stay gave many observers the chance to study it in detail. Any doubts that I had that it might not be a Royal Tern were debated with others and, as discussions developed, we came to realise that many of the identification features in the current literature were wrong. The bird was a Lesser Crested Tern, a species not then on the British List. It was photographed (*Brit. Birds* 76: plate 231), and I obtained the following description:

A tern very slightly larger than Sandwich Tern, with a striking orange-coloured bill.

At rest, very similar in shape to accompanying Sandwich Terns, but just very

slightly larger and heavier. In flight, distinctly longer-winged. Bill orange with slightly paler tip, of much same length as that of Sandwich, but significantly thicker, especially at base: dagger-like and straight. Legs blackish, much as those of Sandwich in length and proportion. Extensive white forehead containing only slight blackish flecking. Tiny blackish mark immediately in front of eye. Short but shaggy blackish crest normally held quite erect—distinctly more so than that of Sandwich, and when relaxed extending only a short way down nape. Mantle and upperwings pale grey, slightly darker than those of Sandwich. Tail very slightly paler

grey than rest of upperparts, with extreme outer edges white. Quite deep fork to tail, with slightly longer streamers than those of Sandwich. Rump pale grey, very slightly paler again than tail. In flight, upperwing showed darker grey wedge of central primaries, the outer two primaries and the inner ones being relatively pale silvery-grey. Underwing largely whitish with dusky tips to only the outer four primaries. Underparts white. Normal attitude on ground was a proud 'shoulders-forward' stance, displaying to Sandwich Terns, particularly to those standing around carrying sand-eels.

The final correct identification was delayed because Lesser Crested Tern, especially the race likely to be involved in European records, is such a poorly known species and is treated misleadingly in the literature. Lesser Crested Terns occur from East Africa eastwards to Australia, with some geographical variation in appearance across their range. There is also a little-known population in coastal Libya, which apparently winters south and west at least as far as The Gambia in West Africa: it is these birds which are likely to be responsible for the British and European records (*Brit. Birds* 80: 276-280). Interestingly, the East African Lesser Cresteds are now known to be rather smaller and darker than those from Libya. Since the descriptions in the European field guides are based on the East African birds, it is scarcely surprising that the Blakeney bird appeared rather larger and paler than expected.

This record has now been accepted by the *British Birds* Rarities Committee. With the acceptance of an earlier record, in Gwynedd in July 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 556), the one at Blakeney Point becomes the second in Britain and Ireland.

S. J. M. GANTLETT

*Tickers, High Street, Cley next the Sea, Holt, Norfolk NR25 7RR*

## Diary dates

**This list covers July 1988 to June 1989**

**9th July** ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE MIDDLE EAST AGM. Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, South Kensington, London. Details from the Secretary, OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

**11th July** BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB. Dr C. C. H. Elliott on 'The Quelea problem in Africa'. Central London. Non-members should write (enclosing SAE) at least 21 days before to Hon. Secretary, R. E. F. Peal, 2 Chestnut Lane, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3AR.

**22nd-31st July** SOCIETY OF WILDLIFE ARTISTS' ANNUAL EXHIBITION (including display of winning entries in 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award' competitions). The Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1. Open 10 a.m.-5p.m. Admission £1.00 (free to SWLA members).

**20th August** ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB. Blakeney Village Hall, Blakeney, Norfolk. Details from Steve Rooke, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.



**10th September** BTO SOUTH YORKSHIRE ONE-DAY CONFERENCE. High Melton (near Doncaster). Details from Dr Harold Smith, 16 Silverdale Close, Sheffield S11 9JN.

**20th September** BOC. Dr C. T. Fisher on 'Birds of Australia (particularly on the discovery and distribution of Australian birds 1835-1850)'. Central London. Details from Hon. Secretary.

**24th-25th September** RSPB NATIONAL VOLUNTEERS' CONFERENCE. Loughborough University. Details from Conference Office, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

**1st-2nd October** RSPB SPONSORED BIRDWATCH.

**21st-23rd October** BOU AUTUMN SCIENTIFIC MEETING. Maritime Museum, Liverpool. Details from Dr Clem Fisher, Liverpool Museum.

**26th-29th October** RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION ANNUAL MEETING. St Paul, Minnesota, USA. Details from Dr Patrick T. Redig, Raptor Research and Rehabilitation Program, College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Minnesota, St Paul, MN 55108, USA.

**28th-30th October** SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Marine Hotel, North Berwick. Details from SOC, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

**29th-30th October** RSPB MEMBERS' WEEKEND & AGM. Details from Conference Office, RSPB.

**4th-6th November** BTO UNDERSTANDING BASIC STATISTICS COURSE. Gibraltar Point Field Station, near Skegness, Lincolnshire. Details from John Perry, Bridge End Cottage, Mill Lane, Ingleton, via Carnforth, Lancashire LA6 3EP.

**5th or 12th November** BTO BERKSHIRE ONE-DAY CONFERENCE. Details from BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR.

**18th-20th November** IRISH WILDBIRD CONSERVANCY/BTO AUTUMN CONFERENCE. International Hotel, Killarney, Co. Kerry, Ireland. Details from IWC, Rutledge House, 8 Longford Place, Monkstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

**26th November** OSME TENTH ANNIVERSARY. The Friends' House, Euston Road, London. Details from the Secretary, OSME.

**2nd-4th December** BTO ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Details from Tim Davis, BTO.

**2nd-4th December** NATIONAL EXHIBITION OF CAGE AND AVIARY BIRDS. National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham. Details from Brian Byles, Editor, 'Cage and Aviary Birds', Prospect House, 9-15 Ewell Road, Cheam, Surrey SM3 8BZ.

**10th December** OBC AGM. The meeting Room, Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY. Details from Steve Rooke, OBC.

**6th-8th January** BTO RINGING AND MIGRATION CONFERENCE. Hayes Conference Centre. Details from Chris Mead, BTO.

**21st January** RSPB FILM PREMIÈRE. Royal Festival Hall. Details from Film Show Organiser, RSPB.

**28th-29th January** RSPB/YOC INTERNATIONAL GARDEN BIRDWATCH (RSPB Centenary Event).

**31st January** Closing date for entries for 'Bird Photograph of the Year'.

**31st January** Closing date for 'Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs'.

**7th February** BOC. Dr A. J. Knystautas on 'Birds of the Soviet Union'. Central London. Details from Hon. Secretary.

**17th February** RSPB 100TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION. Didsbury, near Manchester. Details from Public Affairs Office, RSPB.

**14th March** Closing date for entries for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year'.

**28th March-9th May** YOC FLIGHTLINE. Migration phone-in. Telephone Sandy (0767) 80551. Tuesdays only, 5.30 p.m.-7.00 p.m. Records from adults welcomed.

**1st April** RSPB 'MASTERMIND'. Semi-finals and final, chaired by Magnus Magnusson. Birmingham. Details from Public Affairs Office, RSPB.

**7th-9th April** RSPB CENTENARY MEMBERS' WEEKEND. York University. Details from Conference Office, RSPB.

**14th-16th April** BOU ANNUAL CONFERENCE. Preliminary announcement. On 'Applied Ornithology'. Surrey University, Guildford. Details from BOU, c/o The

British Museum (Natural History), Sub-department of Ornithology, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP.

**29th April-1st May** RSPB EUROPEAN BIRDWATCH. Details from RSPB.

**28th-30th May** RSPB YOC SPONSORED BIRDWATCH. Details from RSPB.

*Sheila D. Cobban, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ*

## Announcement

**New items in British BirdShop** The following items are added this month:

Hosking, Hosking & Flegg *Eric Hosking's Birds of Prey of the World*  
 Martin *Guinness Book of World Birds*  
 Mild *Soviet Bird Songs* (2 cassettes)  
 Robinson *A Birder's Guide to Japan*

This is the final month for *The Birds of Africa* special offer. Other special offers are marked on the British BirdShop forms on pages xiii & xiv.

## Reviews

**Collins Guide to the Birds of Prey of Britain and Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.** By Benny Génsbøl. Illustrated by Bjarne Bertel. Revised edition. Collins, London, 1987. 384 pages; 108 colour plates; 72 black-and-white plates; 300 line-drawings; 42 distribution maps and migration charts. £14.95.

This chunky, field-guide-sized book, first published in 1984 but now extensively revised, attempts to be both popular handbook and identification guide. There is a short introduction to characteristics of birds of prey, such as bills, feet, sense of smell and vision, followed by a discussion of raptor foods, hunting methods, migration and breeding biology. A short section on raptors in the modern world ably summarises the problems of pollution, persecution past and present (with interesting data on past persecution in Europe to add to the story in Britain more familiar to most *British Birds* readers) and protection.

Then follow over 200 pages, divided into individual species accounts, each including a detailed, very clear map and distribution summary, data on populations and trends, useful and detailed summaries of migration routes, timing and numbers, habitat preferences, voice (rather briefly treated), breeding data and information on food and hunting methods and interesting photographs. Finally for each species, there is an illuminating table, giving detailed, dated and mostly recent population estimates for each country, with comparisons with earlier times where available. Where there have been changes in numbers, reasons are suggested. This makes depressing reading in most instances, and the number of entries noting decreases or major declines, frequently coupled with shooting, poisoning and nest robberies, is staggering. The maps and these tables both serve to show the dearth of raptors these days in central southern Europe. Italy and Greece have a particularly sad record. Many of the figures are from the early 1980s, some as recent as 1986, and this is an admirably thorough compilation.

The rest of the book is devoted to identification, with much longer accounts than in any field guide, and beautiful black-and-white drawings (pencil or wash rather than line), many of which appear to be based on photographs. The drawings show birds in action, from many angles, and most succeed, though the interesting question of how much we need standard field guide 'control' illustrations is raised by one or two 'out of context' pictures of birds caught in momentary, odd positions.

A few of the drawings—such as some of the Merlins *Falco columbarius*—seem less happy to me, but as a set they are really excellent. The texts have, by a combination of the original writing and editing and/or translation, a rather free, occasionally slightly naive style of English, refreshingly lacking in identification-paper clichés and formality, but just occasionally slightly unclear. For example, ‘an elegant bird in the air, but scarcely as elegant as the golden eagle, although . . . can appear slender and elegant’ is not the most elegant way of putting it; to say that the White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* can be confused with other raptors ‘but none of these has the head so far forwards nor the tail so far backwards’ (does that mean the tail so short?) and that, in comparison, Black *Aegypius monachus* and Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus* both have ‘much protruding head’ (should it be much less?) is not helpful; the Lesser Kestrel *F. naumanni* cannot be recognised by ‘its own spotted back’, but by its unspotted back.

These few carps apart, this is a book to be recommended for any bird-of-prey enthusiast, and any bird protectionist who needs to know what is going on in the rest of the Western Palearctic.

R. A. HUME

**Eric Hosking's Birds of Prey of the World.** By Eric and David Hosking with Jim Flegg. Pelham Books, London, 1987. 176 pages; 160 colour plates; 29 black-and-white plates. £15.95.

It is a cunning ruse indeed to draw a reviewer's teeth by thanking him on the very first page of text in the book. Consequently, I am mightily happy to relate that my reviewer's impartiality was not compromised.

Having been a little disappointed with some of the previous books in the series, let me state unequivocally that this new book is immeasurably better, being superbly conceived, produced and printed. The visual impact of the presentation is stunning; every new page being a joy to open. Whether taken in the wild or in the studio, the photographic images are exquisite. It would be easy to comment that some of the captive birds were less than feather-perfect, but that would be carping, as the studio-photographed subjects are perfectly valid in the context of this book. Also, and this is most important, there is no pretence that the birds are wild and free.

So many of my bird watching-loving-studying friends and acquaintances are particularly fascinated by birds of prey and there is no doubt that this beautiful book will reinforce that fascination in some and kindle it in many. The text, most ably written by Jim Flegg, is a fitting and apt accompaniment. It is interesting, authoritative, lucid and a pleasure to read, with lots of little nuggets of information. It must have been difficult to produce a narrative which would not be eclipsed by the powerful visual images, but the author has achieved this. Furthermore, it must be stressed that one is not left with the impression of a book put together from a random collection of photographs kept together by words in a row. Nothing could be farther from the truth. This book is quite superb in all respects: a compliment to its author, and I take great pleasure in commending it to all, tyro or expert. I feel sure that everyone will enjoy it as much as I did.

DON SMITH

## Short reviews

**The Mushrooms and Toadstools of Britain and North-western Europe.** By Marcel Bon. (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1987. £8.95) Beginners should not be deterred by the somewhat arbitrary use of English names and the poor organisation of the text; the illustrations are clear and accurate, and the species accounts are up to date. This guide is better than many, and will be welcomed by experts. [MB]

**One Man's Island: paintings and sketches from the Isle of May.** By Keith Brockie. (J. M. Dent & Sons, London, 1987. 150 pages. Paperback £8.95) Paperback version of book reviewed in *Brit. Birds* 77: 641.

**Avian Genetics: a population and ecological approach.** Edited by F. Cooke and P. A. Buckley. (Academic Press, London,

1987. 488 pages. £40.00) This collection of invited papers covers many aspects of 'applied genetics' in wild bird populations; studies of captive birds are specifically excluded, and the emphasis is very much towards field-based research. This is a successful volume, and fills an important gap in the academic market, highlighting both the advances in our knowledge over the past 20 years and those areas which are in need of further study. [MB]

**The Value of Birds.** Edited by A. W. Diamond and F. L. Filion. (ICBP, Cambridge, 1987. 320 pages. Paperback £18.50) Proceedings of Symposium and Workshop held at the XIX World Conference of the International Council for Bird Preservation, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, in June 1986, with 25 contributions arranged under two main headings: 'Birds as socio-economic resources', and 'Birds as bio-indicators of environmental conditions'.

**Audubon Wildlife Report 1987.** Edited by Roger L. Di Silvestro. (Academic Press, Orlando, 1987. 697 pages. \$39.95) Detailed reports on wildlife management in the USA.

**Proceedings of the Fifth Nordic Ornithological Congress, 1985.** Edited by Mats O. G. Eriksson. (Kungl. Vetenskaps- och Vitterhets-Samhället, Göteborg, 1987. 228 pages. Paperback. No price given) Mostly in English, and, where not, there is an English summary.

**Atlante Degli Uccelli Nidificanti in Provincia di Forlì.** By Ugo F. Foschi and Stefano Gellini. (Maggioli Editore, Rimini, 1987. 175 pages. L30,000) This large-format, well-produced breeding bird atlas covers 42 'squares' (actually  $10 \times 9.25$  km rectangles) which form the province of Forlì on the North Adriatic coast of Italy. The text is wholly in Italian, but the maps are self explanatory and each text is, of course, headed by the scientific as well as the Italian name (and the traditional small vignette). Anyone planning to visit this part of Italy (which, as well as Forlì itself, includes Cesenatico, Bellaria, Rimini and Riccione on the Adriatic coast) will wish to have a copy of this atlas for reference. What makes this book particularly interesting for all 'atlas buffs', however, is the inclusion of 16 habitat photographs in colour, which adds enormously to the interest for someone who has never visited the survey area. Indeed, the 32 pages of introductory material are worth perusal for several innovative ideas of

presentation of habitat material in a breeding bird atlas.

**Raptor Management Techniques Manual.** Edited by Beth A. Giron Pendleton, Brian A. Millsap, Keith W. Cline and David M. Bird. (National Wildlife Federation, Washington, 1987. 420 pages. \$30.00, plus \$2.75 p&p) Our transatlantic cousins envy our bird books, but they generally lead on technical and practical publications. This one is in loose-leaf binder format to allow for future revisions and additions; there are three main sections—'Field Research Techniques', 'Management Techniques' and 'Laboratory Research Techniques'. Recommended for all serious raptor researchers and conservationists—an excellent source of information, advice and ideas. [MIKE EVERETT]

**The Birds of Ghana.** By L. G. Grimes. (BOU, London, 1987. 276 pages. Paperback £16.00) The ninth in the British Ornithologists' Union's invaluable series of checklists. This covers the 720-odd species in a 152-page systematic list. The introduction and other preliminaries amount to over 50 pages of most-useful summary of geology, topography, climate, habitat, and so on, including 16 black-and-white photographs of typical habitats. The remaining pages are devoted to a list summarising status by means of code letters, numerous assorted appendices, and ten pages of references.

**A Bird-watcher's Quiz Book.** Compiled by Chris Harbard. (Collins, London, 1987. 128 pages. Paperback £2.95) This follow-up to the same author's *Evenings at the Coot and Corncrake* (1986) has the same format (though with rather more cartoons, by Philip Snow). My personal favourites are the tales involving Twitchett, Listman, Stickler, Stringwell & Co. (of which there are several) and Crispin Fisher's pages from Twitchett's field notebook (spot Twitchett's errors). Marvellous, time-wasting stuff! If you like your birdwatching to be fun, this modestly priced little book will provide you with plenty.

**Third International Grouse Symposium, York 1984.** Edited by P. J. Hudson and T. W. I. Lovel. (International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation, 1986. 582 pages. Paperback. FF200.00) This stimulating volume contains papers by a group of game biologists from Europe and North America. Dr S. Myrberget describes cyclic

fluctuations in numbers of Willow Grouse *Lagopus l. lagopus*; Dr Peter Hudson discusses parasitic infection of Red Grouse *L. l. scoticus*, which reminds me of the pioneer research of Edward Wilson in Lovat (1911); Dr C. E. Braun gives a detailed paper on White-tailed Ptarmigan *L. leucurus*; Professors J. E. Bendell and F. W. Zwickel survey the Blue Grouse *Dendragapus obscurus*; and three Canadian biologists, including Dr Stu Macdonald of High Arctic bird fame, explain the functions of supraorbital combs of grouse. Capercaillies *Tetrao urogallus* are specially studied, with papers on habitat, spacing and recruitment, re-nesting, predation and re-introduction. Black Grouse *Lyrurus tetrix* are also highlighted, contributions including a paper by Nick Picozzi and Linda Hepburn describing their studies with radio transmitters. The proceedings are further enlivened by an exchange of rather tart letters between Dr Robert Moss and Dr D. R. Wise on nutrition of Red Grouse.

[D. NETHERSOLE-THOMPSON]

**World of Birds: seabirds.** By **John P. S. MacKenzie** (Harrap, London, 1987. 144 pages. £12.95) A coffee-table book, with many large colour photographs, not all of which are as sharp as they might be. Originally published in Canada, there is a North American bias to the species illustrated, which include skuas, gulls, penguins, grebes and tubenoses. Species names are also American, but a translation is provided: 'Black-throated Diver = Arctic Loon', and so forth. Identification is a bit awry at times, but that may add to the interest for 'Mystery bird' enthusiasts. Errors that I spotted were Fairy Tern *Sterna nereis* which is in fact Fairy Tern *Gygis alba*; Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* for Sooty Tern *S. fuscata*; and Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* identified as Guillemot *U. aalge*, and vice versa. The text is reasonably informative, but Red-necked *Podiceps grise-gena*, Great Crested *P. cristatus*, Slavonian *P. auritus* and Black-necked Grebes *P. nigricollis* are hardly 'truly [*sic*] pelagic in winter'. Not recommended, except to those who wish to add to their collection of bird photographs. [RJC]

**World Birds.** By **Brian P. Martin**. (Guinness Books, Enfield, 1987. 208 pages. £12.95) It is not possible to describe this book without using superlatives, as it contains a wealth of information about avian record-breakers from the tallest, heaviest and most talkative birds to the

most far-carrying song, most valuable nest or most variable egg. It is illustrated with colour and black-and-white photographs and line-drawings, and is full of facts that will amaze your friends. Do Gannets have the greatest appetites? Which birds drink blood? Can Ostriches swallow beer bottles? Does Ron Johns have the biggest British list? All of these questions, and hundreds more, are answered in a full and accurate way. Where an answer may be slightly contentious, other runners-up are given, and the facts behind any claim to fame are described. A useful book, essential to any quiz compiler; and, despite the publishers, toucans are barely mentioned. [CHRIS HARBARO]

**Owls.** By **Chris Mead**. Illustrated by **Guy Troughton**. (Whittet Books, London, 1987. 128 pages. £5.95) This is a first-rate book for the beginner birdwatcher. It is not an identification guide, but covers many of the fascinating aspects of owl characteristics, behaviour and habitat, and is superbly illustrated in black-and-white by Guy Troughton. The drawings are of two distinct types: excellent lifelike portraits within the species' habitat, and equally skilled but entirely different cartoons. It is the latter which make this a book more suitable for the 11- to 15-year-old than for more mature beginners (while all the cartoons are well drawn, and some are funny, they do not really fit happily either with the other illustrations or with the rest of the book). The text reflects Chris Mead's enviable ability to convey his information with a skilful combination of accurate detail, a readable writing style and considerable wit.

**Birdwatching in Southern Spain.** By **Andy Paterson**. (Golf Area SA, 1987. 157 pages. Paperback £6.90) A good book for birdwatchers visiting southern Spain has been needed for many years. It still is. Andy Paterson's book is a conglomeration of speculative comments and unchecked statements, with a few well-known facts thrown in, which does not fill this empty niche. The author claims to have produced a guide for visitors to the Costa del Sol, but misleads with the title 'Southern Spain' (what happened to Doñana, Odiel, Cazorla or the Cordoba lagoons?). The book is biased towards the author's patch (a twitcher's paradise it seems); omits far-more-important sites (even those close to the Costa), as well as typical species (what happened to Audouin's Gull in

the gull section?); and unduly emphasises some species, but underestimates others. Readers would be frustrated if they planned a birding holiday based on this book alone. [STEVE HOLLIDAY & CLIVE FINLAYSON]

**Working Bibliography of the Peregrine Falcon.** By Richard D. Porter, M. Alan Jenkins and Andrea L. Gaski. (National Wildlife Federation, Washington, 1987. 185 pages. Paperback \$16.95, plus \$2.75 p&p) Latest in the NWF series, which already includes owls, Golden Eagle/genus *Aquila* and Bald Eagle. Lists, by authors, 1,401 publications on or including Peregrines, with cross-references by subject, subspecies and geographic area. Good section on Peregrine systematics. Valuable reference work. [MIKE EVERETT]

**A Birder's Guide to Japan.** By Jane Washburn Robinson. (Ibis Publishing Co., 1987. 358 pages. Paperback US \$14.95) Essential to birders visiting Japan and the first publication in English to treat important birdwatching sites throughout the entire country. Forty-six sites/areas are described in detail under sections including transportation, directions, times to visit, food, accommodation, maps, general information and through the presentation of 57 site-maps. Transportation costs and options receive detailed treatment. The lengthy introductory sections, written in a highly expansive anecdotal style, include much useful general information, entertain and amuse. A section on 'good manners and meeting Japanese' will critically assist smoother interaction with the locals—normally a minefield of misunderstanding for visiting Westerners. Much of the book appears to draw upon earlier, more localised, publications on the subject by Mark Brazil, which have not been credited. [ROD MARTINS]

**The Atlas of British Birdlife.** By Bob Scott. (Hamlyn Publishing/Country Life Books, Twickenham, 1987. 208 pages. £15.00) The title is misleading for anyone who is used to what we have come to know as 'bird atlases'. There are no dot-distributions here. This book is not really designed for the birdwatcher who has reached the level of being a *British Birds* reader. It is, however, a sophisticated, cleverly designed and excellently written guide to which British birds you can see at different times of the year and in different parts of the country. (Despite the title, the

maps do all include Ireland, and three pages are devoted to Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland at the end of the book.) As a book on 'where to go and what you are likely to see', this would be a very useful addition to the small library of a beginner birdwatcher (this book does not cover identification or the behaviour and habits of birds).

**The Malay Archipelago: the land of the orang-utan, and the bird of paradise.** By Alfred Russel Wallace. (OUP, 1986. 638 pages. £27.50) First published in 1869, this is a facsimile reprint, prefaced by a 20-page modern introduction, of 'the classic work on the fauna and flora and peoples of the area which is now called Indonesia'. Wallace spent the years 1854-62 travelling over 20,000 km through the region, and collecting over 125,000 specimens, mainly insects, but including 212 species of birds new to science. In this fascinating book, based on his field journals, he pioneered the study of zoogeography, noting the meeting and overlap of the Oriental and Australasian faunas in the zone now known as Wallacea. The modern reader can but marvel at and enjoy vicariously this very remarkable man's travels in the Victorian heyday of natural history exploration. [IAN DAWSON]

**Travel Diaries of a Naturalist. III.** By Peter Scott. Edited by Miranda Weston-Smith. (Collins, London, 1987. 223 pages. £17.50) I gave very favourable reviews to the two previous volumes in this series (*Brit. Birds* 77: 132; 78: 466). If anything, I found this third volume even more enjoyable, since it includes more of the original notebook entries and illustrations, which are a delight to the eye. In these extracts, covering trips to Japan, Indonesia, Hong Kong, China, Mongolia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Australia and New Zealand, the reader shares in Sir Peter Scott's excitements, disappointments and reactions to a whole range of experiences and people. By the end of the book, there have been insights not only into the places visited, but also into the character of Sir Peter himself, and his lifestyle. This isn't an essential book for an ornithological library, but it is an excellent browse and a splendid bedtime read. The illustrations (mostly in colour) are taken from the original field notebooks, and relate mostly to birds and fish, but also to other animals and plants.

# News and comment

*Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett*

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

**Monofilament nets and seabirds** We have received a note from Dave Flumm in which he describes a harrowing one-and-a-half hours, during which he witnessed the struggles of many Guillemots *Uria aalge* and Razorbills *Alca torda* caught in two monofilament nets in Carbis Bay, St Ives, Cornwall. In that time he counted 536 drowned auks (mostly Razorbills) and two Shags *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*. Although this event was publicised by the news media at the time (early February 1988), we feel that further comment is necessary. Monofilament nets are so fine that when they are set they become practically invisible to the fish they are designed to catch; they are invisible also to other 'valueless' fish, as well as birds, dolphins and seals, many of which are likely to become entangled. The nets are popular with fishermen because of their high level of catching efficiency; but surely *we* are not prepared to accept the deaths of so many birds (and other creatures), populations of which are already affected by other forms of pollution at sea, as part of the price of such efficiency? As Dave points out, there have been no more major incidents in St Ives Bay since then; but who knows how many birds end up in monofilament nets out of sight of land-based observers? This quite sickening episode (which, following press and television coverage, caused instant 'cover-up' action the next day when bird corpses were placed in weighted black sacks and thrown overboard) should make us all write to our MPs in an effort to get the use of the nets controlled or banned.

**Raptor watchers needed in Israel** If you are hooked on raptors, you will be aware of the potential for watching the thousands which migrate through Israel. The Israel Raptor Information Center is planning to survey the migration at Kfar Kassem during this autumn. They expect to see a total of over half a million Honey Buzzards *Pernis apivorus*, Levant Sparrowhawks *Accipiter brevipes* and Lesser Spotted Eagles *Aquila pomarina*, to mention but three species. Experienced birdwatchers are needed and will be provided with accommodation and some money for food. If you can spend at least one month over there, write with the

dates you could be available and a short *curriculum vitae* to Dan Alon, Israel Raptor Information Center, Har Gilo Field Study Center, Doar Na Tzafon Yehuda 90907, Israel.

**Pagham Harbour and wildfowlers** We have no doubt that many readers will have visited Pagham Harbour Nature Reserve at some time, possibly on many occasions; but those who rarely go to this internationally important reserve probably do not realise that it is still shot over by wildfowlers. The local population are opposed to the continuation of the shooting and are to draw up a petition to the local council in the hope of obtaining a ban. If you would like to support them, write with your objections to: the Secretary, West Sussex County Council, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex.

**Birds in the Yemen Arab Republic** This is the official report of the 1985 OSME expedition to North Yemen, rather different from and complementary to what has already appeared in *Sandgrouse* 9. It is available, price £4 including p. & p., from OSME (Yemen Report), c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL. (Cheques to be made payable to Ornithological Society of the Middle East.)

**Birds of Turkey 6** This is the latest in a series about bird areas in Turkey and concerns the Yeniçağa Gölü, a lake in the Upper Yenice area of the western Black Sea region. Brief descriptions are given of the lake, its surroundings, climate, ornithological significance, other fauna, human activities and nature conservation problems. The bulk of the booklet (19 of 32 pages) is given over to the list of species (183), with brief details of the status of each one. To obtain a copy send £2 to Dr N. Koch, Waldprechtsstr. 67, D-7502, FRG. (Cheques to be made payable to Max Kasperek.)

**OBC Third AGM** More than 130 people turned up for the Oriental Bird Club's third AGM held in December 1987 at the Zoological Society in London. The meeting began with Paul Andrew sharing his expertise on the little-known birds of Indonesia, many of



which are endemic. Among the slides were shots of the paintings which were published with the original descriptions. Paul's fascinating talk, telling how many of these species have not been seen for decades, will no doubt have inspired some visits in the direction of Indonesia. Adam Gretton described work carried out by the International Council for Bird Preservation last year on Gurney's *Pitta pitta gurneyi* in Thailand and the hours he spent watching at the nest. He played a tape of the bird's distinctive call. After the teabreak, Frank Rozenaal, over from Holland, showed his excellent slides of a recent trip to Sichuan Province, China, where he was studying bush warblers. This was followed by the film 'Crane Hunters of Pakistan' by American film-maker Steven Landfried, which explained the history of crane catching in North West Frontier province where Demoiselle *Anthropoides virgo* and Common Cranes *Grus grus* are caught and kept as status symbols. The film looked at the efforts of the Pakistan Wildlife Department to convey a conservation message to catchers, and to enforce the laws against crane catching.

OBC Chairman Richard Grimmett announced that in 1987 the Club had over 620 members from 36 countries, including 17 in Europe and 13 in the Orient. He reported that during the year OBC's Conservation Fund has supported research on Gurney's *Pitta* and the publication of a report on the status and conservation of forest birds in Thailand by Phil Round, which will soon be available from ICBP. The comfortable and excellent facilities of the new venue were appreciated by all those who have squeezed into the Finsbury Library for previous AGMs. The Christmas raffle, which included a year's free subscription to *British Birds*, raised £101 for the OBC Conservation Fund. The OBC can be contacted c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL. (Contributed by Helen Taylor)

**Fiendish Finns foiled** In an exposé in the Nigerian newspaper *National Concord*, the real reasons for bird-ringing have been revealed.

We quote: 'News of "strange bird" (ringed) flying into the country from other parts of the world provides one with food for thought. Once of such news appeared at the back page of *National Concord* of Monday 30th November 1987. I am at a loss to understand why these "strange birds" prefer to fly to Nigeria over-flying all other African nations with similar atmospheric weather conditions. Is Nigeria becoming an epidemic nation of "strange birds" invested? The Embassy of Finland claimed that the strange birds did not escape from any Zoo in Finland but he asserted that the birds were specifically caught by scientist fitted with special rings on the legs. In that wise therefore, I would like to ask this question; "From where are these scientists? Is the embassy telling us Nigerians that the scientists are from Finland prospecting possible spying birds on our land?"

'Awake Nigeria, these birds could be spy birds since they were fitted with "special rings" with other possible equipment hidden in their stomach or body thereby intercepting/transmitting coded messages from any of the government bodies i.e. State House, The Army, Police, Naval and the likes since these birds movements could be successfully controlled/monitored from their country of origin. Though I am not an expert but I presume that the so-called "special rings" could magnetize sophisticated message and/or information equipment.'

We are grateful to D. H. Phillips, who spotted this item and felt that it deserved a wider audience.

**Another gaff** Richard White has sent us an article from Portsmouth's *The News* in which Richard Williams tells readers that Ravens are not birds of doom and death, but are thrilling to watch and are good . . . even in spring when 'the pair will by then be feeding three or four red grapes'. We wondered if the sub-editor is a vegetarian?

**Change of County Recorder** Wendy Mattingley, Cluny House, Aberfeldy, Perthshire PH15 2JT, has taken over from E. D. Cameron as Recorder for Tayside (Perth & Kinross).

## Seventy-five years ago...

'When the inquiry now in progress was being formulated, it was recognized that the Land-Rail formed a special case by itself, for the following reasons: (1) a decrease in the abstract was already proved for a considerable area; (2) the decrease had been going on for a long time; (3) many of the details were already known to many people, and they only wanted systematically collecting and collating.' (*Brit. Birds* 7: 5, June 1913)

# Monthly marathon

Sponsored by



**T**he bird in plate 88 was clearly a swan *Cygnus*,\* but which? Entrants named it as:

Bewick's Swan <i>Cygnus columbianus</i>	(77%)
Whooper Swan <i>C. cygnus</i>	(12%)
Mute Swan <i>C. olor</i>	(10%)
Trumpeter Swan <i>C. buccinator</i>	(1%)

Despite its head and bill being turned away, so that identification had to be based mainly on structural evidence, particularly the relative length and thickness of the neck in comparison with the body size, the majority of competitors identified it correctly. This Bewick's Swan was one of a flock photographed by Robin Williams in Somerset in December 1978.

Of our two leading contenders, E. Brodie unfortunately plumped for the wrong swan, but Anthony McGeehan got it right, and so now moves on to achieve a six-in-a-row sequence of correct answers, and has just four to go to win the SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday in Asia, Africa or North America. A further 94 competitors are chasing him, all with two right, and a much larger group with just one correct answer so far. A single mistake by Anthony McGeehan and the competition will once again be wide open. What's that bird in plate 159? Send in your answer now.

**159.** Second 'Monthly marathon' competition. Photograph number 14. Identify the species. Read the rules on page 49 in the January 1988 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th July 1988



# February reports



*Ian Dawson and Keith Allsopp*

**These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records.**

**Unless otherwise stated, dates refer to February 1988.**

*The mild winter weather continued into February. A series of depressions tracked eastward to the north, with active fronts moving rapidly across all districts. A warm anticyclone developed in mid Atlantic from 16th, but the consequent shift to more northerly winds did not result in much cooler air temperatures until 23rd, when Arctic air was diverted southward. This airstream pattern persisted until the end of the month, bringing snow to northern hilly districts.*

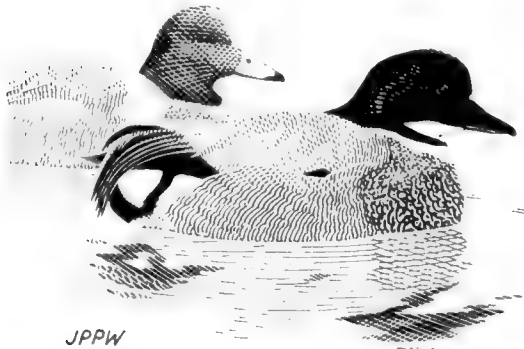
## **Aythya one or the other**

It is remarkable how soon after a species has occurred for the first time in Britain and Ireland that more follow. Although a 'difficult' species, birdwatchers have long been aware of the possibility of the arrival of **Lesser Scaups** *Aythya affinis*, and a number of *Aythya* hybrids have in the past been claimed as that species. Following the sighting at Chasewater (Staffordshire) last winter, an adult male has now turned up on Lough Corbet (Co. Down). This site held a female **Ring-necked Duck** *A. collaris* all month, and an obvious *Aythya* hybrid was also present until 12th. On 13th, however, the genuine article arrived, sometimes commuting to Hillsborough a few kilometres away, and remaining into March. Perhaps

there has been a real increase or spread in North America, or maybe the two seen this side of the Atlantic are one and the same.

#### Divers to herons

There was a good count of 26 **Black-throated Divers** *Gavia arctica* off Ballyvaughan (Co. Clare) on 21st, while **White-billed Divers** *G. adamsii*, once very rare, appeared for an extended stay off St Ives (Cornwall) from 8th, and the Whalsay Ferry (Shetland) individual was 'showing very well' off Symbister in this its tenth winter in Shetland waters. The Kenfig Pool (Mid Glamorgan) **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* remained throughout, and **Red-necked Grebes** *Podiceps grisegena* were well scattered, with two reaching Ireland.



Strong winds on 9th pushed 5,000 **Fulmars** *Fulmarus glacialis* per hour past Strumble head (Dyfed), while, a week previously, a **Storm Petrel** *Hydrobates pelagicus* off New Passage (Avon) for 15 minutes was a most unseasonal find. **Gannets** *Sula bassana* were watched streaming past Eyemouth (Borders) at the rate of 2,300 per hour on 17th. There was a small local influx of about a dozen **Shags** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* late in the month into the southeast English midlands, six or seven of these in Cambridgeshire.

A **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* could regularly be found in Poole Harbour (Dorset), and the venerable **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus*

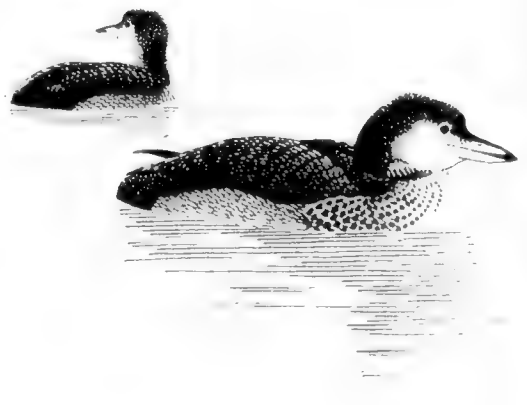
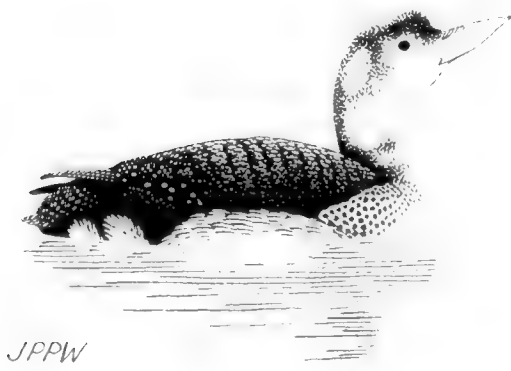
continued to please afternoon observers at Stodmarsh (Kent). Two **Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* remained on the Taw Estuary (Devon).



#### Wildfowl

Following the good numbers of inland **White-fronted Geese** *Anser albifrons* earlier in the winter, 11 remained at Swarkestone (Derbyshire) until 20th, and 37 were with Pinkfeet *A. brachyrhynchus* at Marshside (Lancashire/Merseyside). A **Lesser White-fronted Goose** *A. erythropus* could, with considerable patience, be found at Slimbridge (Gloucestershire). Two **Snow Geese** *A. caerulescens* were still to be seen on Islay (Strathclyde), and another was on Wexford Slobs (Co. Wexford). Two **Brent Geese** *Branta bernicla* of the race *nigricans* were on the Irish east coast, while the Cley/Salthouse (Norfolk) individual was joined briefly by a second on 5th; and their rare relative, the **Red-breasted Goose** *B. ruficollis*, was also still present.

There were only three each of **American Wigeons** *Anas americana* and **Teals** *A. crecca* of the Nearctic race *carolinensis*: in the ratio 2 : 1, Ireland : England. Thrapston and Ringstead Gravel-pits (Northamptonshire) played alternate hosts to the **Falcated Duck** *A. falcata*, while an early sign of summer was the young drake **Garganey** *A. querquedula* found wearing a BTO ring at Slimbridge on 14th.

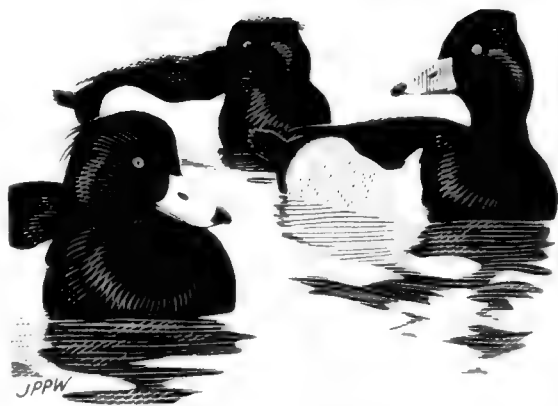


Four **Ring-necked Ducks**, two of each sex, and some half dozen or so **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca* remained at regular wintering sites. Similarly, there were two regular drake **King Eiders** *Somateria spectabilis* on the east coast of Scotland, plus another one or two males, along with, less usually, a female, in Shetland. Around a dozen inland **Long-tailed Ducks** *Clangula hyemalis* were perhaps more than usual, while **Surf Scoters** *Melanitta perspicillata* included two each in Ireland and Wales, and three together in Gosford Bay (Lothian).

### Raptors to waders

In a good winter for **Red Kites** *Milvus milvus* outside their usual restricted area of Wales, another three came to our notice. In contrast, there were few reports of **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus*, three of the half dozen predictably being in East Anglia.

After the exceptionally mild winter, many waders returned early to their breeding grounds. Four **Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta* were back at Holme (Norfolk) on 16th, and **Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis apricaria* and **Curlews** *Numenius arquata* had returned to the Derbyshire moors and uplands of southeast Scotland. A **Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus* appeared at Holkham (Norfolk) from 24th, and a **Whimbrel** *N. phaeopus* at Tynninghame (Lothian) on 27th was the earliest ever in that region. There was a big count of 504 **Snipes** *Gallinago gallinago* at Sandwich Bay



(Kent) on 20th. **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularia* remained at Seaview (Isle of Wight) and on the Plym Estuary (Devon); and there were three scattered reports of **Grey Phalaropes** *Phalaropus fulicarius*, including two off Fleetwood (Lancashire) on 9th.

### Skuas to auks

Half a dozen **Great Skuas** *Stercorarius skua* appeared on seawatches at well-scattered locations and dates. Good numbers of **Mediterranean Gulls** *Larus melanocephalus* included more than a dozen inland. As one would expect, **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis* showed a much more westerly bias, with minima of seven in Ireland, two in Wales, five in Scotland and twelve in England: all in the west. **Little Gulls** *L. minutus* also favoured the west, with more than 300 taking refuge along the coast of northwest



England during gales on 9th. An adult **Laughing Gull** *L. atricilla* at Penmaenmawr (Gwynedd) for a few days from 11th remained elusive, and a first-winter **Bona-parte's Gull** *L. philadelphia* was at Porth-scatho (Cornwall) around 6th.

The total of 60 or so **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucoides* was inflated by 20 at Ullapool (Highland) and ten at Killybegs (Co. Donegal), while one of the Nearctic race, *kumlieni*, remained at Banff (Grampian). Ullapool and Killybegs held similar numbers of **Glaucous Gulls** *L. hyperboreus*. More spectacular was the adult **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* found in Galway Bay (Co. Galway) from 28th.

Appropriately, **Sandwich Terns** *Sterna sandvicensis* were at Sandwich on 6th and 21st, and a **Forster's Tern** *S. forsteri* was seen again on Anglesey. The strong winds in the early part of the month caused some mortality of **Little Auks** *Alle alle*: of 50 reported, more than 40 occurred in the first 12 days, 28 of these picked up exhausted, and all but three in the west; the few later records showed a more easterly bias.

#### Passerines

The first **Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* braved the Devon air over Honiton on 22nd, and last month's **Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* at Bromeswell (Suffolk) survived to at least 8th.



160. Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*, Devon, February 1988 (Richard G. Smith)

161. White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii*, Cornwall, February 1988 (Richard G. Smith)





162. Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*, Mid Glamorgan, February 1988 (Howard Nicholls)



163. Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* and Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, Clwyd, February 1988 (Steve Young)

164. Ring-billed *Larus delawarensis* and Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus*, Co. Down, February 1988 (Jack Malins)







Another early migrant was a **Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* on The Skerries (Shetland) on 16th. In a very poor winter for the species, a solitary **Waxwing** *Bombycilla garrulus* at Broughton Astley (Leicestershire) was a star attraction from 20th. **Dippers** *Cinclus cinclus* of the nominate black-bellied race were at Sopwell (Hertfordshire) for at least the first half of the month, and Thorington Street (Suffolk) from 21st to 26th. At least seven **Blackcaps** *Sylvia atricapilla* at Berrow (Somerset) on 28th perhaps indicated a movement of wintering birds, and the **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* at Ashby de la Zouch (Leicestershire) managed to survive all month. Only a couple of new **Great Grey Shrikes** *Lanius excubitor* appeared. A flock of 200 **Twites** *Carduelis flavirostris* was inland at Gladhouse (Lothian), and 26 spent the month on Walney Island (Cumbria). Numbers of **Lapland Buntings** *Calcarius lapponicus* were well down compared with earlier in the winter, though there were notable inland records at Williamthorpe (Derbyshire) on 20th, and three at Anglers Country Park (West Yorkshire) around the same time.

165. Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*, Leicestershire, February 1988 (J. B. Higgott)

## Recent reports

*Compiled by Mark Boyd*

This summary covers the period 18th April to 15th May 1988

**Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* Glen Columcille (Co. Donegal), end April.

**Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* River Slaney, near Wexford (Co. Wexford), 20th-28th April.

**Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oedinenus* Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), 10th May.

**Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* Dawlish Warren (Devon), 27th April to at least 4th May.

**Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* Northwich (Cheshire), 8th May; Nuneaton (Warwickshire), 8th May; Winthorpe (Nottinghamshire), from 9th May; Minsmere (Suffolk), 11th May.

**Lesser Crested Tern** *Sterna bengalensis* Farne Islands (Northumberland), from 13th May.

**Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* Near Wexford, two during 15th-29th April;

Bough Beech Reservoir (Kent), 23rd April; Sandwich Bay (Kent), two on 26th April; Stodmarsh (Kent), 28th April.

**Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia* Dungeness (Kent), 11th May; Sandwich Bay, 15th May; Blakeney Point (Norfolk), 15th May.

**Daurian Redstart** *Phoenicurus aureus* Isle of May (Fife), 29th-30th April, when died.

**Moussier's Redstart** *Phoenicurus moussieri* Strumble Head (Dyfed), 27th April.

**Black-eared Wheatear** *Oenanthe hispanica* Bewl Bridge Reservoir (Kent), 5th May.

**Savi's Warbler** *Locustella luscinioides* Ballycotton (Co. Cork), from 1st May.

**Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* St Agnes (Scilly), 10th-11th May.

**Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* Broadstairs (Kent), 12th May; Blakeney Point, 14th May.



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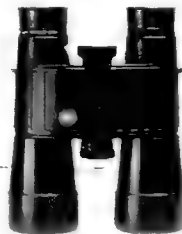
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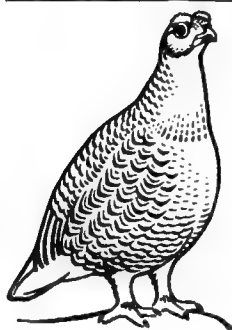
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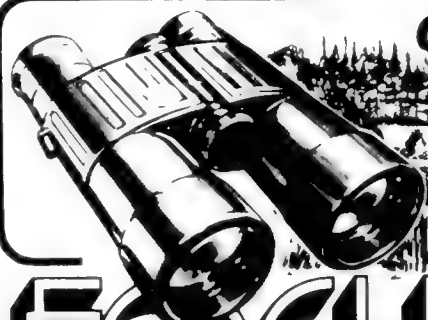
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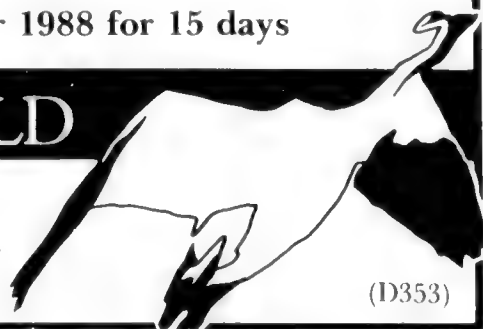
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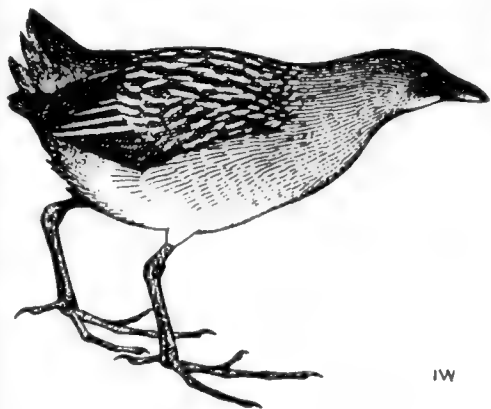
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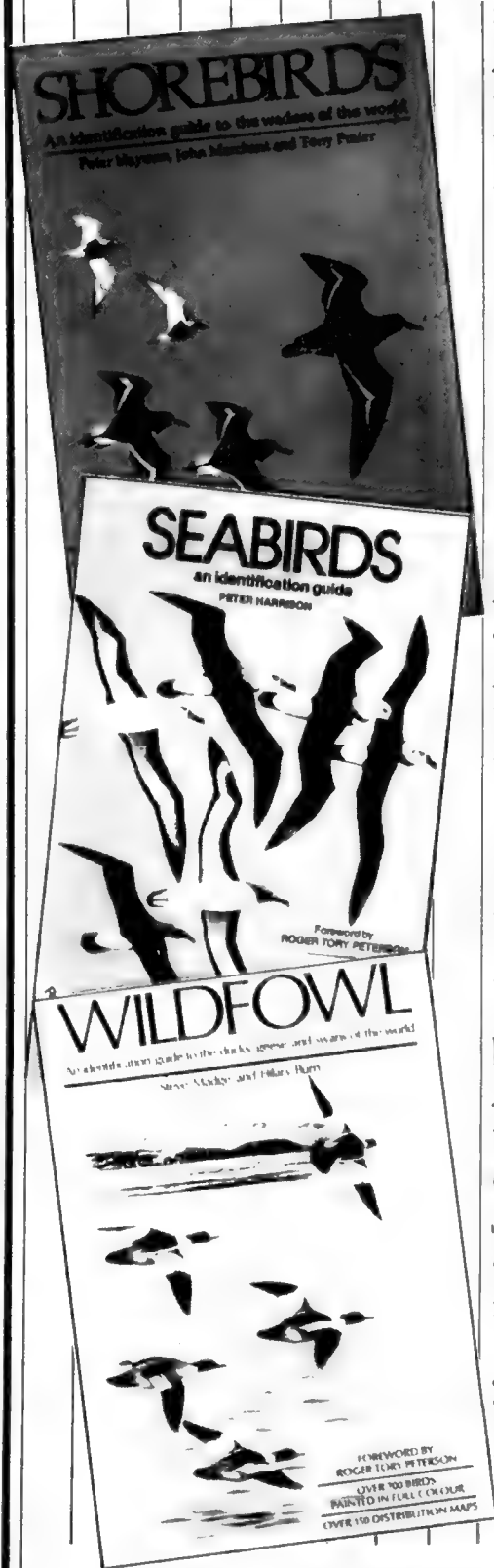
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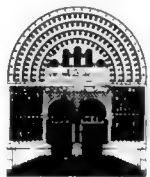


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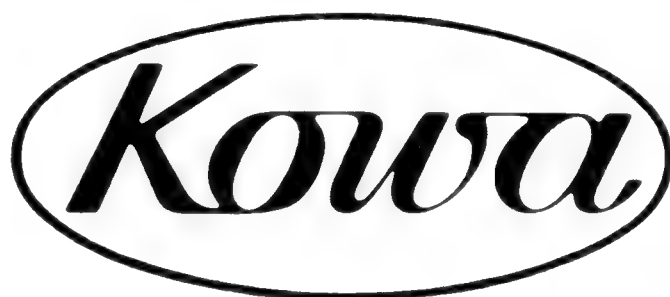
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# British Birds

VOLUME 81 NUMBER 7 JULY 1988

## ‘Bird Illustrator of the Year’ and ‘The Richard Richardson Award’

*Sponsored by*



**T**he sponsorship of ‘Bird Illustrator of the Year’ by *Kowa* telescopes is warmly welcomed, and is particularly appropriate, since an increasing number of artists use ‘scopes when sketching birds in the field. The winners were as follows:

**BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR, 1988**

**1st Martin Hallam (Reading, Berkshire)**

**2nd Nicholas Pike (Woodbridge, Suffolk)**

**3rd John Davis (Chichester, West Sussex)**

*Runner-up* Darren Rees (Newtown, Powys)

**THE RICHARD RICHARDSON AWARD**

**1st John Cox (Romford, Essex)**

*Runner-up* Stephen Message (Cranbrook, Kent)

As in previous years, we found ourselves with a long short list for the main award which we eventually reduced to eight names. As well as those listed above, these were: Nik Borrow, Andrew Hutchinson, Michał Skakuj





Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*  
(Martin Hallam)

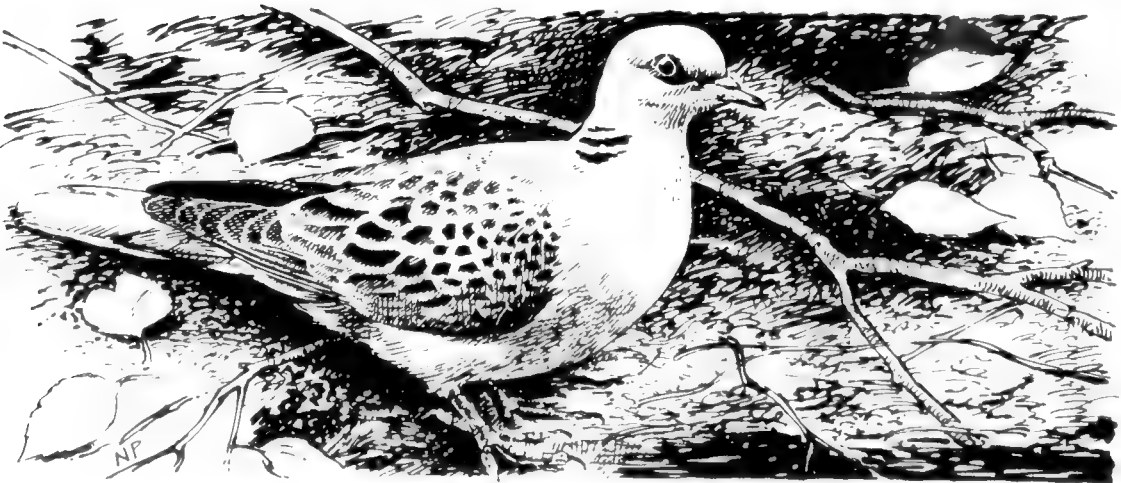


Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* (Martin Hallam)

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* (Nicholas Pike)



Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* (Nicholas Pike)



Rooks *Corvus frugilegus* (John Davis)

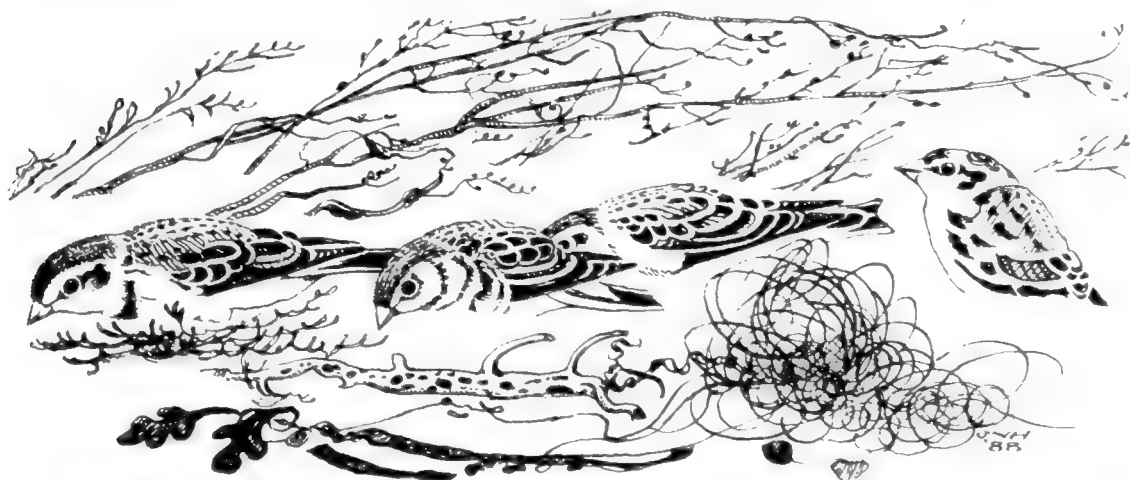


and Andrew Stock. The seven other artists on our original short list were: Tony Bellars, G. B. Brown, David Daly, Martin Elliott, Ernie Leahy, Dave Nurney and Gordon Trunkfield.

All three winners have been placed in previous competitions. Martin Hallam and Nicholas Pike were third and second respectively in 1985, and John Davis was third in 1986.

We felt that some of the artists whose work we knew well from previous competitions had not sent in drawings to their own highest standards and maybe this was a contributory factor in the difficulty we experienced in placing the best entries. Nevertheless, the general standard was high, and we were greatly impressed by many individual drawings. It is the ability to produce a set of four of uniformly high standard that sorts out the best from the also-rans.

We have always liked the individual style in John Hollyer's work and, although his name has not figured amongst the prizewinners, we have selected his work for use on several covers in recent years. This time, one of his drawings instantly appealed to us and we eventually decided that it should be awarded the PJC Award for individual merit, established last year by David Cook in memory of his wife Pauline. It is decorative, full of atmosphere as a group of Snow Buntings *Plectrophenax nivalis* drifts along a beach amongst dead vegetation. It captures the spirit of the birds, their way of life and their habitat in a way many more conventional, 'accurate' and detailed drawings often do not. Another by John which gave us much pleasure was a witty drawing of Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* standing, or landing, on a grating—seen from below with a complex arrangement of birds, shadows and reflections. That it seemed not instantly appropriate

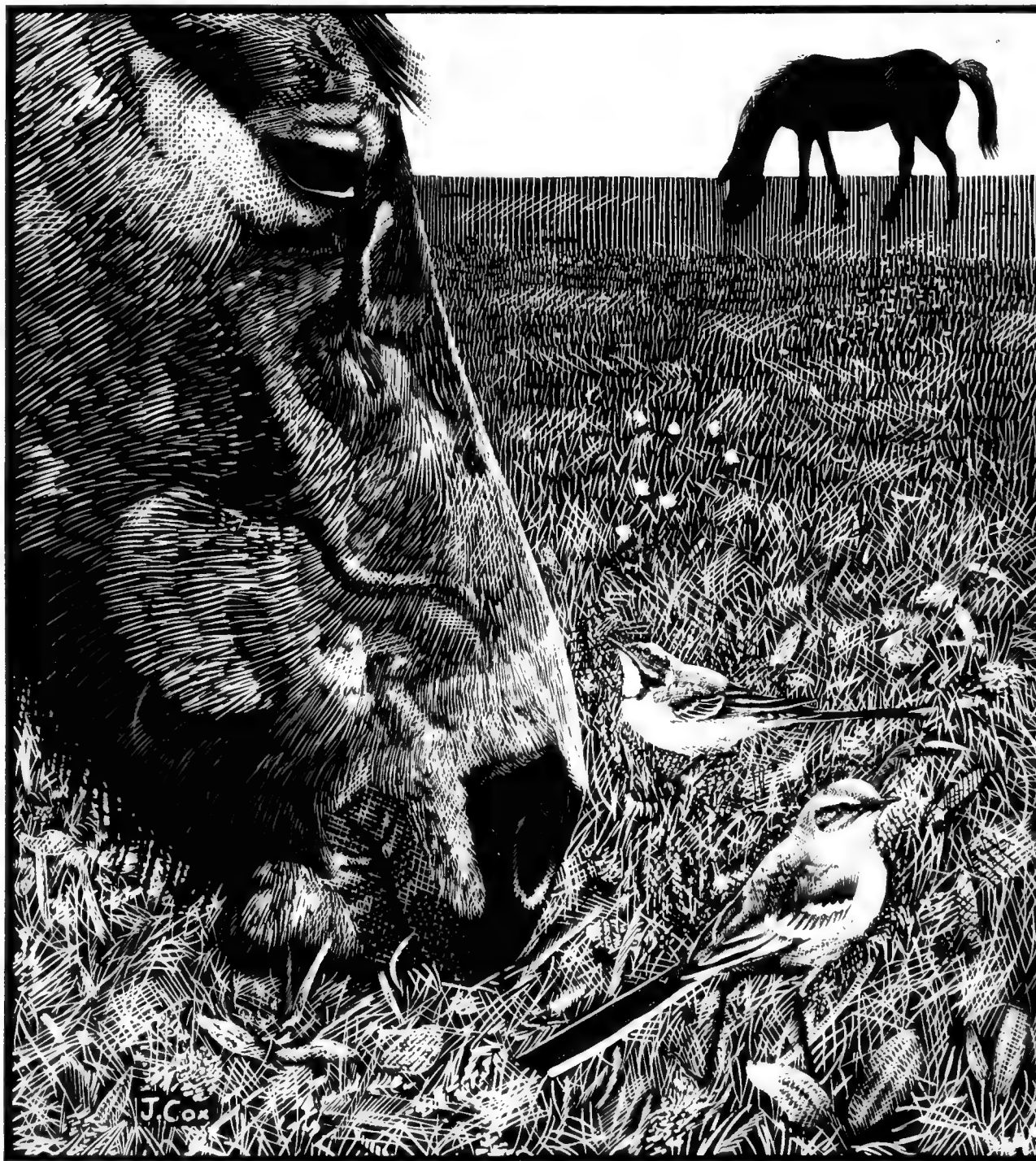


WINNER OF THE PJC AWARD: Snow Buntings *Plectrophenax nivalis* (John Hollyer)

for *BB* is probably more a criticism of *BB* than of *JH*. We also liked very much a simpler drawing of a Herring Gull, by Tony Bellars, which will appear as a cover in due course, and Andrew Stock's intricate and detailed group of Teals *Anas crecca*.

Artists are given a very precise set of measurements to work to and it should be the easiest part of the competition to do so. To be out by a millimetre means that a drawing has to be reduced separately from a group that is scaled accurately, and this adds to costs. The Editor was horrified to discover that, of all the drawings sent to the printer following the judging—for this issue and future covers—some 60% were not drawn

Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava* (John Cox)



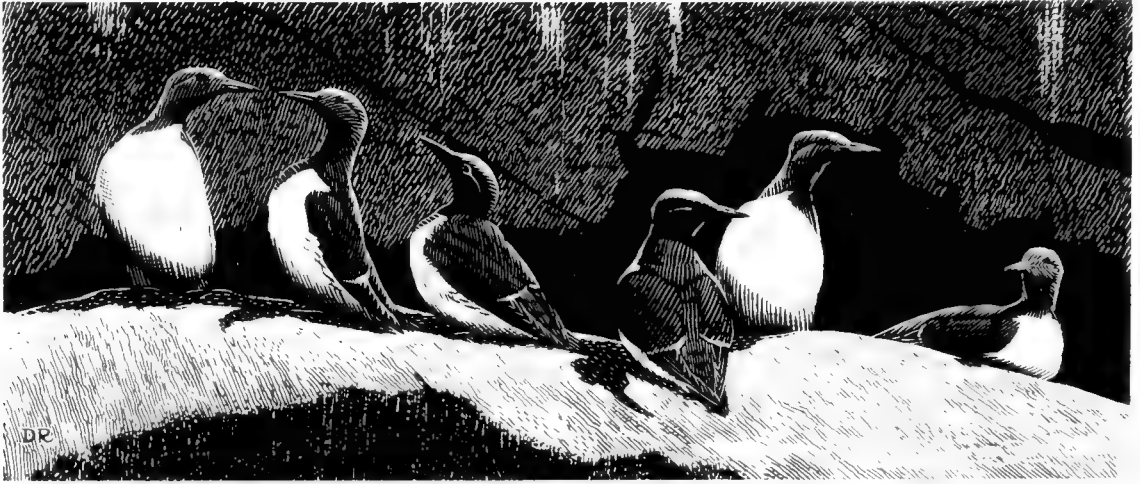
strictly to the correct size. Next year, we shall look at this aspect of the competition very carefully, as we expect a completely professional approach by winning entrants. The competition is to find work suitable for printed reproduction in a magazine such as *BB*, and accurate dimensions are an important part of the exercise.

The winner, Martin Hallam, produces drawings that will give the printer no trouble and the ornithologist no problems. They are crisp and delicate, have a sense of design, and are rich in tone and texture, produced with skilled, controlled pen work. We especially admired his Great Snipe *Gallinago media* and its habitat, but our sailor judge was properly critical of

Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava* (John Davis)







Guillemots *Uria aalge* (Darren Rees)

a wave below Martin's Wilson's Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*; note, however, that no artist escaped criticism of at least one drawing. Nicholas Pike's group was nicely varied, from his tiny Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* on an abandoned concrete block to a Blackbird *Turdus merula* perched among a fine pattern of willow leaves, which will appear on the August cover; its bill is perhaps a trifle stumpy. John Davis achieves some rich textures in his work, and his Bewick's Swans *Cygnus columbianus*, which will feature on a future cover, well conveys the feeling of a cold, windy, winter's day. His Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava* are rather too large in relation to the cow's head; but what a brave effort!

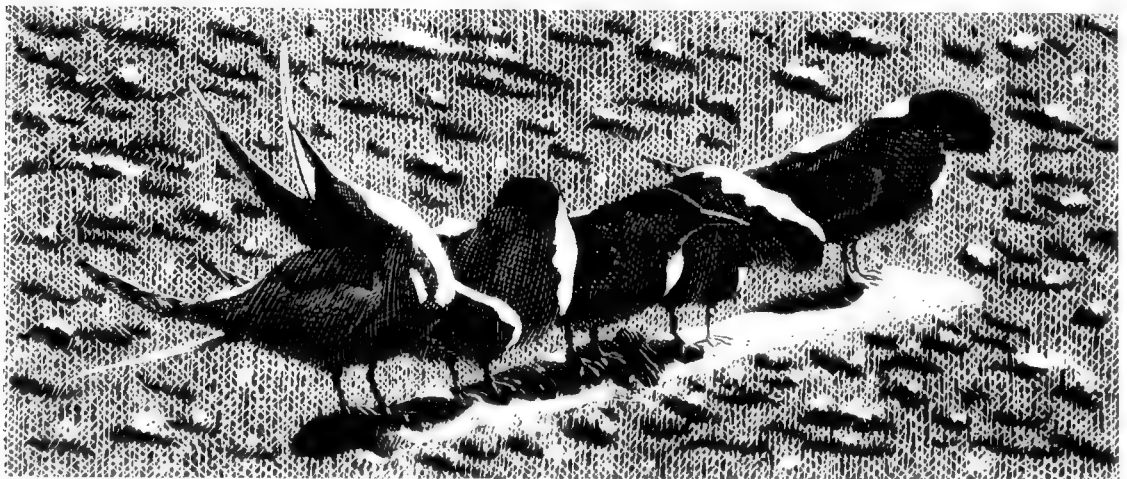
Darren Rees always produces good work, but we felt the drawing of the sea in the background to his splendid Puffins *Fratercula arctica* let the drawing down. Readers will have the chance to agree or not when it appears on a cover next year.



Left, Coot *Fulica atra* (Stephen Message)

Opposite, Teals *Anas crecca* (Andrew Stock)

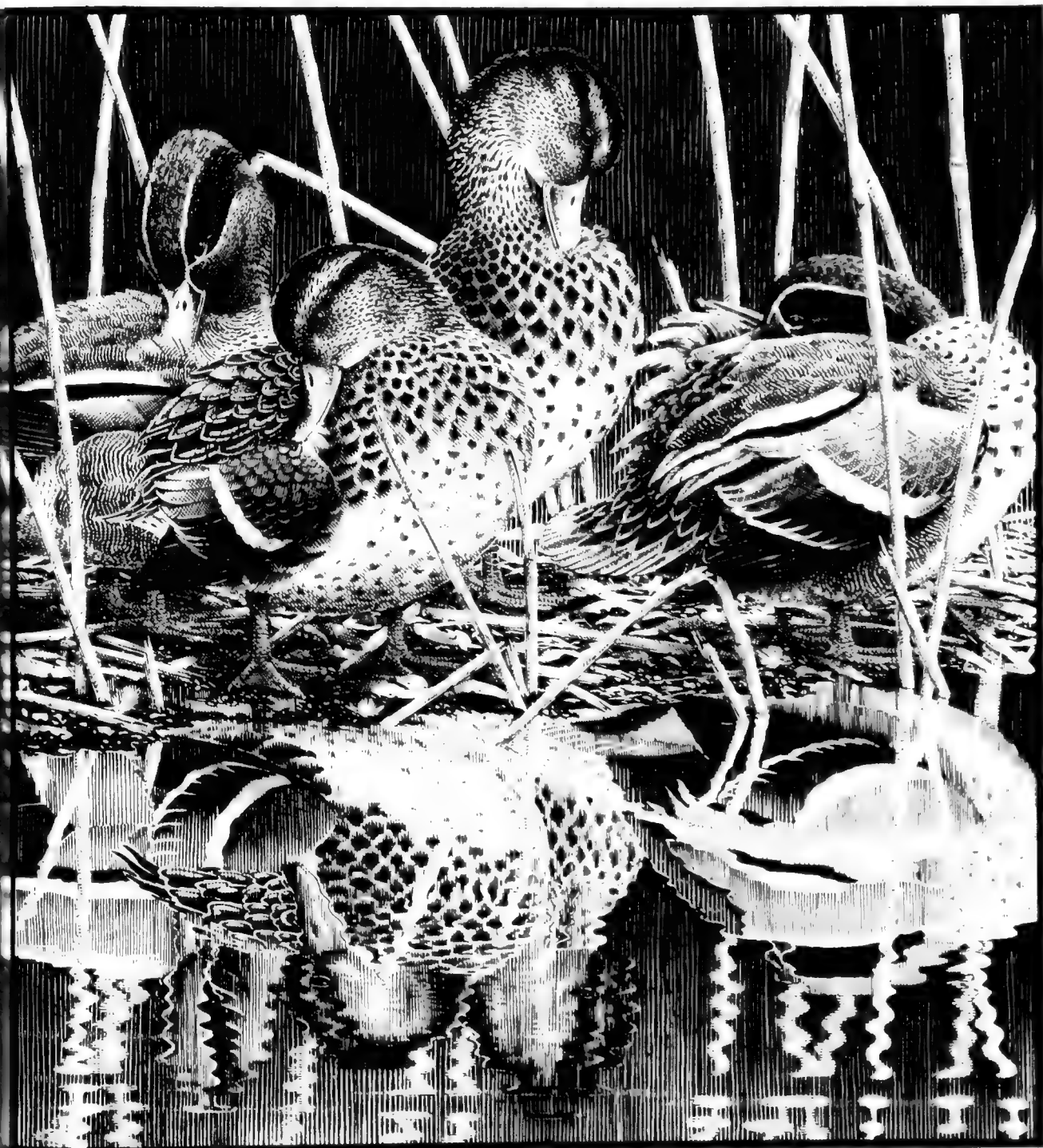
Common Terns *Sterna hirundo* (John Cox)



Among the entries for the Richard Richardson Award, John Cox's work stood out. His two Magpies *Pica pica* harassing an oiled Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* was a striking but uncomfortable drawing. It did, however, certainly fulfil our request, made last year, for more drawings of birds doing something of interest. Stephen Message's drawings impressed, and we had no hesitation in listing him as runner-up, to acknowledge his work. He was also runner-up last year.

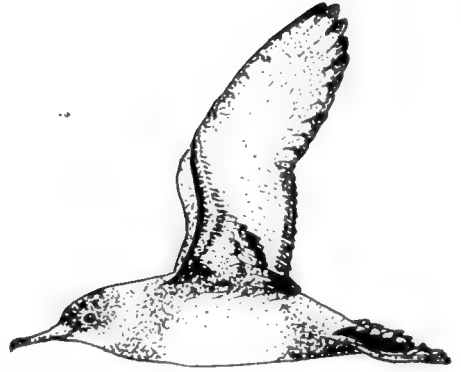
All the entries by the winners, and selected drawings by 48 others, will be exhibited throughout the 25th Annual Exhibition of the Society of Wildlife Artists at the Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1, during 22nd to 31st July 1988.

ROBERT GILLMOR, KEITH SHACKLETON and  
J. T. R. SHARROCK



# The Yelkouan Shearwater

## *Puffinus* (*puffinus*?) *yelkouan*



*W. R. P. Bourne, E. J. Mackrill, A. M. Paterson and P. Yésou*

**I**n the classical Greek period, 2,500 years ago, two seabirds had already given rise to immortal legends in the eastern Mediterranean. The Siren was reputed to lure seafarers to their doom by singing upon outlying rocks, a habit found in a variety of marine animals, but particularly characteristic of petrels on misty nights. The larger species of the area in particular, once known as the Mediterranean Shearwater and now as Cory's Shearwater, which still bears the local vernacular name Diomedee and scientific name *Calonectris diomedea* in memory of one of the Greeks who besieged Troy (Winthrope 1973), has a voice very like a foghorn. In contrast, the Halcyon was equally celebrated because it was never seen ashore, and thought to reproduce upon the surface of the sea in calm weather, which was named after it. This seems equally characteristic of a smaller species, long known as the Levantine Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan* until it was reclassified early in this century as a race of the Manx Shearwater *P. puffinus yelkouan*, since it does not fly so well, and is prone to settle in flocks on the water far from its island breeding-places when the wind falls.

Although the identity of these birds was forgotten over the years, and they were eventually considered to be all sorts of strange things, such as Gannets *Sula bassana* and Kingfishers *Alcedo atthis* (Yapp 1987), Winthrope (1973) reported that the name Halcyon is still used for the 'Levantine Shearwater' in its area of origin. There, it appears to have given rise via the modern Turkish 'Yelkouan' or 'Yelkovan', also used for the souls of the dead (Vian 1877, cited by Mayaud 1936), or 'spirit of the wind', and hence weathercock (Pierre Loti, cited in an annotation by J. Vielliard to Kumerloeve 1972), to the species' scientific name. In the last century, it was thought to wander to British seas, until N. F. Ticehurst (1908) noticed that one collected in Kent about 1865 and identified by John Gould as a new species was originally reported to be pink, and remained unusually dark, below. Witherby (1921) eventually showed that all the British specimens belonged to this form, which was described as a third race of the Manx Shearwater, *P. p. mauretanicus*, by Lowe (1921). A discussion between leading British ornithologists and some distinguished visitors, including Alexander Wetmore, Ernst Mayr and Sir Charles Fleming, under the chairmanship of Lowe, when C. B.



Ticehurst eventually located the breeding-place in the Balearic Islands, was summarised as follows (Anon. 1930):

'Mr Witherby called attention to the fact that he had personally examined almost every example of this petrel which had been recorded as *P. yelkouan* in the British Isles. Practically every one turned out to be *P. mauretanicus* (Witherby 1921). He also stated that he was inclined to think *P. mauretanicus* would prove to be a separate species. The Chairman said he thought Mr Witherby was right, and he himself had been in doubt as to the position of *P. mauretanicus* as a subspecies of *P. puffinus*. He thought that in considering the question of its specific rank it was necessary to bear in mind that not long ago, geologically speaking, the Mediterranean consisted of two land-locked seas divided by a causeway whose remains were now represented by Italy, Sicily, Malta, Corsica and Sardinia. It seems possible *P. mauretanicus* originated in the western basin.'

The structural differences between the European shearwaters were then studied by Mayaud (1932), who found that, while *puffinus*, *yelkouan* and *mauretanicus* are all very similar, the last two resemble each other, and differ from the first, in having a longer, lower skull with more powerful jaw muscles, and a long sternum, but proportionately short wing and tail adapted for more aquatic habits, while they differ from each other only in their average size and amount of marking below. He also remarked how the extreme forms, *puffinus* and *mauretanicus*, occur next to each other rather than at opposite extremities of the range of the group, as might be expected as the result of convergence in a similar environment and hybridisation if they were all conspecific, though he continued to treat them as the same species.

In the next definitive check-list of the petrels, one of the two greatest authorities of the day, Mathews (1934), added three more very similar North Pacific races to *P. puffinus*. He was initially followed by the other main authority, Murphy (1952), who first went on to add two more

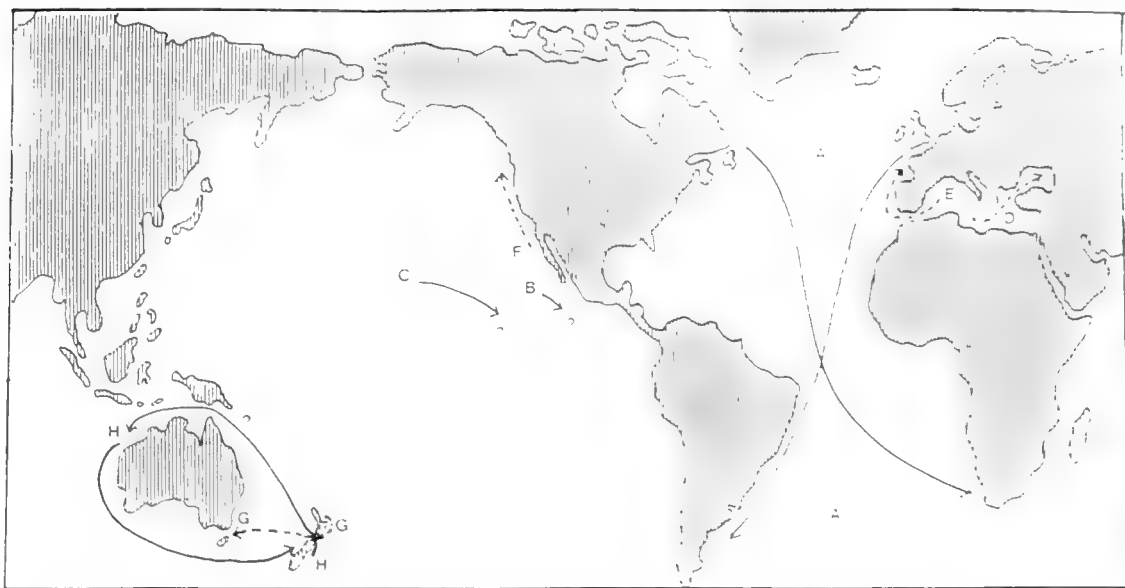


Fig. 1. Distribution of the Manx group of shearwaters *Puffinus*. Continuous arrows show direction of movement of the black-backed forms: **A** Manx Shearwater *P. p. puffinus*, **B** Townsend's Shearwater *P. (p.?) auricularis*, **C** Newell's *P. (p.?) newelli*, **H** Hutton's Shearwater *P. huttoni*. Dashes show movements of the brown-backed forms: **D** Levantine Shearwater *P. (y.?) yelkouan*, **E** Balearic Shearwater *P. (y.?) mauretanicus*, **F** Black-vented Shearwater *P. (y.?) opisthomelas*, **G** Fluttering Shearwater *P. gavia*. (Derived from Bourne 1982) All forms are illustrated by Harrison (1987), and *mauretanicus* and *yelkouan* will be dealt with in detail by Yésou *et al.* (in press)

races from New Zealand, but remarked that the group appeared to be divisible into contrasting black-backed and brown-backed forms everywhere that it occurred, but, when the New Zealand forms were shown by Harrow (1965) to differ markedly in their ecology, eventually concluded that *yelkouan* and *mauretanicus* are also 'more distinct from the Manx Shearwater than present nomenclature indicates' (Murphy 1967).

When Bourne (in Ash & Rooke 1954) saw his first *mauretanicus* alongside nominate *puffinus* in 1953, he immediately thought that they differed in their 'jizz' as well as their markings. On reviewing the petrels for Palmer (1962), he soon developed growing doubts whether they should be considered conspecific when he observed how inconsistently Murphy (1927, 1952) treated the very similar geographical variation of the smallest shearwaters, divided into two species, the Little Shearwater *P. assimilis* and Audubon's Shearwater *P. lherminieri*, and the Manx group, combined into one, *P. puffinus*. After examining both the European and the Australasian forms at sea and considering Murphy's (1967) terminal change of opinion, he eventually decided to reopen the matter (Bourne 1982), whereupon it emerged that the other three authors had arrived independently at similar conclusions.

### Fluttering and Hutton's Shearwaters

At this point, it may be useful to describe the extreme situation found in Australasia. The existence of local allies of the Manx Shearwater with more marked adaptations for diving, which include a reduction of the wings for use in swimming under water, resulting in a more fluttering type of flight similar to that of the auks (Brown *et al.* 1978), was noticed very early, in 1773-74 during Cook's second expedition. For a long time, only one form was recognised, the Fluttering Shearwater *P. gavia*, which has a brown back prone to fade and white underparts. It tends to feed socially inshore on shoaling fish, breeds early in the southern spring on islets around northern New Zealand, and later disperses as far as southeast Australia to moult (Serventy *et al.* 1971).

The existence of a second, larger, dark-backed form with more markings on the sides of the body and underwing, and a very long, slender bill, Hutton's Shearwater *P. huttoni*, was noticed only in 1912, possibly because it disperses out to sea to feed. Even then, its status remained doubtful for over half a century, until eventually it was found to breed two months later in the spring, above the tree-line in the mountains of the South Island of New Zealand (Harrow 1965, 1976), and then migrate to moult during the winter in an area of upwelling which occurs off the northwest coast of Australia during the southeast monsoon (Shuntov 1968; Halse 1981).

These are such dramatic differences that, clearly, the two forms must be treated as distinct species. Indeed, once their marks were worked out, they proved quite easy to tell apart at sea (personal observation, WRPB). A comparable situation appears to occur on a larger scale

among the similar but longer-winged shearwaters of the northern hemisphere. This has been obscured by their greater geographical variation, so that each type is represented by three forms spread across two oceans, where they have traditionally been classified in different ways: as one species in Europe, but as two or three in the Pacific. The resulting confusion has been increased by the fact that, here, it is the brown-backed forms which are the more heavily marked below.

### **Northern black-backed (Manx, Townsend's and Newell's) shearwaters**

The Manx Shearwater *P. p. puffinus* has acquired a misleading image in Europe as an inhabitant of northern seas, where it appears very 'lithe' (Cramp & Simmons 1977) and black-and-white, owing to the comparatively sharp division between the dark upperparts and white underparts as it swoops over stormy waters among stouter Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis*. If, however, we consider the rest of its range, where it has been seriously affected everywhere by introduced predators, a different picture emerges. Thus, some still breed in the mountains of the Canaries, Madeira and the Azores, and formerly bred in the consolidated coral sand-dunes of Bermuda, as far south as 30°N in the Atlantic; and two close allies, Townsend's Shearwater *P. p. auricularis* and Newell's Shearwater *P. p. newelli*, also breed in the mountains of the Revilla Gigedos and Hawaii, and one was found in the last century at Saipan in the Marianas, at 20°N in the tropical Pacific (Bourne 1982; Jehl 1982).

Thus, possibly, this was originally a subtropical oceanic species—with a continuous range through the Strait of Panama before it closed some two million years ago—which has begun to spread north along the warm North Atlantic Drift only since the last ice-age. It has only recently colonised Newfoundland (Storey & Lien 1985), and has not yet reached the North and Barents Seas. These birds all lay rather late in the spring, in April and May, and appear to move south to moult in the winter, in the Pacific as well as the Atlantic (King & Gould 1967), where they may be unable to face the stronger competition from their more numerous southern allies south of the equator. Thus, so far, only the expanding Atlantic population is known to go farther south, where most appear to winter off eastern South America (Thomson 1965), some off southwest Africa (Lambert 1975), and a few individuals reach Australia and New Zealand (Tennyson 1986).

### **Northern brown-backed (Levantine, Balearic and Black-vented) shearwaters**

Although it has been claimed that little is known about the Mediterranean representatives of the Manx Shearwater, large series have been discussed by Loomis (1919) and Mayaud (1932), and they are common birds in well-known seas. Basically, they resemble tubby, short-tailed Manx Shearwaters with a rather bustling, fluttery flight, a brown back which fades markedly and then appears very patchy when the dark new feathers start to appear during the moult, and a variable amount of diffuse marking on

the underparts, which therefore often show less contrast with the upperparts (Yésou *et al.* in press). They tend to feed in groups on the water offshore, and lay early on offshore islets around the northern Mediterranean when the marine divergences are best developed there, between February and April (Ovchinnikov 1966; Gallagher *et al.* 1981), dispersing north to moult where front-formation occurs offshore later in the summer.

Nominate *yelkouan* is known to breed on offshore islets from the south coast of France and eastern Algeria west to the Aegean, and at least once in the Black Sea off Bulgaria (Cramp & Simmons 1977; Bricchetti 1979; Ledant *et al.* 1981). It is slightly larger in its average dimensions than nominate *puffinus* (table 1), and has a browner back. Although it has been claimed that it may vary locally in shade, this may be due to variation in the amount of fading in different areas or age-groups (Yésou *et al.* in press), and little difference can be seen in 20 skins in fresh plumage from Tunisia, Corsica, Italy, Sicily, Malta, Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey, the largest (wing 143 mm) from Malta in December. There is normally more diffuse pigment beneath the tail than on *puffinus*, and in about half it extends up the side of the body beneath the wing. One individual taken off Oran, Algeria, on 6th March 1873, with dimensions near the mean for this race (wing 134 mm), otherwise resembles the darker specimens of *mauretanicus*, and could belong to either form. Similar specimens taken later in the season show a variable amount of fading above.

The birds normally appear to lay in March and April everywhere, and fledge their chicks by July. They appear to feed in coastal currents at this time, and 11 dated specimens out of 16 from the famous feeding-place in the current leaving the Black Sea through the Bosphorus were taken between March and June. Subsequently, many appear to move east and

166. Yelkouan Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan mauretanicus*, Menorca, Spain, May 1985 (Ed Mackrill)



north; a chick ringed off southern France in July was recovered off eastern Sicily a month later; an adult ringed in Malta in May was recovered in Greece in mid July; and two chicks ringed in Malta were recovered the following June and in August three years later off the north coast of the Black Sea. Tens of thousands congregate for much of the year, to feed on anchovies *Engraulis encrasicolus* in this last area, where a marine front is shown by infra-red satellite images, and it may serve as a nursery for young birds (Frank 1952; Van Impe 1975; Cramp & Simmons 1977; Brichetti 1979; Sultana & Gauci 1982; Jarry 1986; Department of Electronics, Dundee University).

Subsequently, the old birds may return to the breeding area, since they start to visit the colonies off the south coast of France by November (Vidal 1965). Others, which may be largely immature, or displaced by hard weather, also appear to move south and east into the area where they are not yet known to breed. One newly fledged bird in the Royal Scottish Museum came ashore in Cyprus on 26th August 1969, and three adults were collected off the coasts of Israel and Egypt (where anchovies also occur in the Nile outflow) in September, three were taken there and two off Tunis in January, and six were taken off Tunisia in March. Some apparently occur off Tunisia and Algeria (where an unknown number breed) throughout the year (Brichetti 1979; Ledant *et al.* 1981), but reports of their occurrence farther west have not yet been substantiated by specimens. Hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of predominantly pale moulting birds, which seem likely to include at least a proportion of *yelkouan*, have, however, been reported mainly from boats in the Strait of Gibraltar as far west as Tangier Bay in some but not all summers in the past (Telleria 1981; de Juana & Paterson 1986; E. Garcia & C. Finlayson *in litt.*). Bourne also thought that the great majority of a flock of about a thousand moulting shearwaters seen from a submarine off Algeciras Bay on 11th September 1964, rather late in the season for *mauretanicus*, resembled *yelkouan*, though Mackrill and Paterson have failed to identify it from the shore, and it has never been proved to reach the Atlantic.

The form *mauretanicus* may appear larger than *yelkouan*, and some are more heavily marked below, owing to the progressive extension of the pigment beneath the tail, which may already extend up the side of the body on *yelkouan*, on to the underwing and across the breast. This is most marked on an immature in the British Museum (Nat. Hist.) which was collected on Mallorca on 27th July 1927, which has much of the underparts 'powdered' with coffee-coloured pigment. Some thousands of pairs are known to lay in February and March in the Balearic Islands, when shearwaters have also been heard calling along the northeast coast of Spain (de Juana 1984). One skin in the BM (NH) was collected off Algiers on 24th February 1873, when the small dark bird of uncertain race reported above was taken off Oran on 6th March, and another in the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle was taken off the mouth of the Moulaya River, eastern Morocco, on 15th March 1957. A few were seen off the Camargue, France, on 27th March 1961 (Erard 1962), and they are said to reach Corsica, Sardinia and Libya (Bundy 1976; Brichetti 1979),

though Thibault (1983) considered that more proof is required for at least Corsica.

Some stay near the Balearic Islands all the year around, and small groups of moulting birds have also been observed off southeast Spain in summer (de Juana & Paterson 1986; AMP & EJM); it is not clear which form occurs off North Africa at this time. The bulk of the population start to leave the Mediterranean in May, with the peak at Gibraltar in late June (Telleria 1981), while a northward movement involving over 4,000 birds was seen near Lisbon in mid June 1983 (A. M. Teixeira *in litt.*). Some 10,000-15,000, which have included two juveniles ringed on Formentosa and Mallorca in the Balearic Islands one and three months before, then gather in the vicinity of a marine front off the west coast of France, where the old birds moult (Yésou 1985, 1986; Hémery *et al.* 1986). Moulting birds have been collected off Devon and Sark, in the Channel Islands, in August, and small numbers, which may include a high proportion of apparently immature dark birds, reach the northern limit of their range off Scotland and Scandinavia in September (Cramp & Simmons 1977), when they appear to accumulate in the vicinity of another front off northeast England (Witherby 1921; Hope Jones & Tasker 1982). Two moulting birds are also said to have been collected in False Bay, South Africa, on 29th September 1979 (Mackrill 1988).

Thousands of birds have been seen leaving the Bay of Biscay around northwest Spain in September and October (Huyskens & Maes 1971), and two in fresh plumage in the BM (NH), collected off Portugal in October, which puzzled Ash & Rooke (1954) could have been taking part in this movement. Although Bourne detected only a few *mauretanicus* among the numerous shearwaters moulting in the Strait of Gibraltar in September 1964, Mackrill has seen them returning east there regularly from 19th October (Yésou *et al.* *in press*). This race also reappears at the breeding places from November (J. Mayol & J. Muntaner verbally), although some, possibly the darker immatures, appear to spend the winter in an area of upwelling with a rich food supply also frequented by Audouin's Gulls *Larus audouinii* from the Mediterranean (Beaubrun 1983) off west Africa (Mackrill in Yésou *et al.* *in press*), and continue to return through the Strait of Gibraltar into March (Pineau & Giraud-Audine in Mayaud 1982).

Unfortunately, the Californian Black-vented Shearwater *P. opisthomelas*, which has normally been treated as a distinct species, appears to be one of the least-studied members of the group. Its skins are, however, intermediate in size and appearance between those of *yelkouan* and *mauretanicus*, with a more marked tendency for dark markings to occur in a band across the breast, and, in common with the other North Pacific forms, it has a comparatively long tail (table 1). Its behaviour is apparently very similar to that of the Mediterranean forms, the birds feeding inshore, breeding on offshore islets in the south of their range early in the spring, and dispersing north to moult later in the summer (Palmer 1962).

## Discussion

A species has been defined as a group of organisms which interbreed



167. Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* (left) and Yelkouan Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan*, Corsica, France, May 1982 (Nicolas Crispini)

freely with each other but not with other species. In the last century, a multitude of geographical forms of birds, many of which obviously intergrade and interbreed with each other, were described as distinct species, until the number became unmanageable, and the less distinct entities were demoted to geographical races of other species, in an equally uncritical manner. In the process, a number of 'sibling species' were united as races of the same species, although it has since been shown that they differ in a number of respects and by no means interbreed freely. An early example is provided by the classical observation by Gilbert White (1789) that more than one species of *Phylloscopus* occurs in Britain; another by the discovery that Willow Tits *Parus montanus* occur commonly among British Marsh Tits *P. palustris* (Rothschild 1907); and, more recently, the Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica* has also been recognised as a distinct species (Knox 1976).

In each case, once the difference was recognised, the birds were found to vary in a number of ways, including their voices, habitat preferences, annual cycles, and movements. It appears that, when races of the same species come into contact with each other, they are liable to interbreed and intergrade; whereas, when distinct species meet, they seldom interbreed, and instead tend to develop exaggerated differences, which serve as isolating mechanisms which help to maintain their distinctness. Bourne (1955) has postulated that the occurrence of this phenomenon, later christened 'character displacement' by Brown & Wilson (1956; but see criticisms by Grant 1972), provides a test for the distinctness of similar species, quoting the European shearwaters as an example.



Table 1. Characters of the Manx Shearwater.  
Measurements: mean, standard deviation and range in mm all by WRPB. A  
dealt with in detail by Yésou *et al.* (1977).

Form	Habitat	Breeds	Migrates	Markings
EUROPE				
Manx Shearwater <i>P. p. puffinus</i>	P	N Atlantic hills & isles Apr-May	S Atlantic Sep-Mar	Black, white below
Levantine S. <i>P. y. yelkouan</i>	C	E Mediterranean cliffs & isles Mar-Apr?	Black Sea Jul-Oct?	Brown darker sides
Balearic S. <i>P. y. mauretanicus</i>	C	W Mediterranean cliffs & isles Feb-Mar?	NW Europe Jul-Oct	Brown, dull below
NORTH PACIFIC				
Newell's S. <i>P. p. newelli</i>	P	Hawaii mountains May-Jun?	E tropical Pacific? Dec-Feb?	Black, white below
Townsend's S. <i>P. p. auricularis</i>	P	Revilla Gígedos mountains Feb-Mar?	Sedentary?	Brown darker sides
Black-vented S. <i>P. y. opisthomelas</i>	C	Baja California isles Feb-Mar?	NW North America Jul-Oct?	Brown, dull breast
NEW ZEALAND				
Fluttering S. <i>P. gavia</i>	C	North Island islets Sep-Oct	SE Australia Feb-Aug?	Brown, white below
Hutton's S. <i>P. huttoni</i>	P	South Island mountains Nov-Dec?	NW Australia Mar-Sep?	Darker back, sides

It is notable that Mayaud (1932) had already remarked that *mauretanicus*, which regularly encounters *puffinus* when it migrates from the western Mediterranean into the Atlantic, shows a greater difference in size and appearance from it than does the eastern Mediterranean form *yelkouan*, which appears to migrate in the opposite direction into the Black Sea, where *puffinus* is absent. Subfossil remains about 30,000 years old, which apparently belong to another shearwater of the *yelkouan* group about one-third larger than the existing forms, have now also been found at a former colony on the low, desert island of Lanzarote in the eastern Canary Islands, close to a colony of *puffinus* in the mountains of the western island of Palma (C. J. O. Harrison, C. Walker and A. Martin, verbally and *in litt.*), so that the birds may have differed to an even greater extent when they bred in closer proximity during the last glaciation.

An examination of the characteristics of the surviving members of the Manx group of shearwaters as a whole (table 1) indicates that, in all three areas where they occur, they can be divided into two types: dark-backed birds which tend to feed out at sea, nest late in the season in mountains inland, and migrate into or through lower latitudes to moult in the winter; and brown-backed birds which tend to feed inshore, nest earlier in the season on offshore islets, and disperse into higher latitudes to moult in the

Group of shearwaters *Puffinus*

Forms are illustrated by Harrison (1987), and *mauretanicus* and *yelkouan* will be (p). Habitat: P = pelagic; C = coastal

No.	Measurements (mm)				Ratios			
	Wing	Tail	Culmen	Tarsus	W/Tl	W/C	W/Ts	Ts/C
235±5.7 221-243	73.3±3.1 68-79	34.9±1.3 32-37	45.0±1.3 43-49	3.2	6.7	5.2	1.29	
232±5.6 220-243	70.1±3.0 63-74	36.0±1.5 34-74	45.1±1.5 43-48	3.3	6.4	5.1	1.25	
246±5.6 234-254	72.7±2.1 68-76	38.5±1.9 35-43	47.9±1.4 46-50	3.4	6.4	5.0	1.24	
239±7.8 230-245	82.0±2.6 79-84	33.0±2.0 31-35	46.0±1.7 45-48	2.9	7.2	5.0	1.39	
230±4.8 225-237	76.3±1.9 74-79	32.7±1.5	45.4±1.3	3.0	7.0	5.1	1.39	
240±5.3 231-252	79.2±2.9 72-83	36.8±1.8 33-39	45.1±1.6 43-49	3.0	6.5	5.3	1.23	
206±5.7 198-213	59.8±2.2 58-64	33.3±1.6 30-35	42.1±2.4 40-45	3.4	6.2	4.9	1.26	
220±5.3 212-230	65.4±2.9 61-71	36.0±1.0 35-38	42.2±1.1 40-44	3.4	6.1	5.2	1.17	

summer. The local representatives of the two forms have normally been treated as distinct species in the North Pacific, and have recently been recognised as distinct in Australasia; yet, although a variety of good authorities listed earlier have repeatedly suggested that they may be distinct, they have always been treated as conspecific in Europe.

Murphy (1952) has suggested that this situation arose because the birds' common ancestor evolved in the great Tethys Ocean, which once encircled the middle latitudes of the northern hemisphere in the early Tertiary period some tens of millions of years ago, and then dispersed in opposite directions around the world, through an ancient waterway between Eurasia and Africa to the east, and a more recent one between the Americas to the west, until the diverging extremes met and developed an overlapping distribution. This seems questionable because it would have provided little opportunity for the segregation of distinct stocks with different habits likely to provide isolating mechanisms when they came into contact again, and because the eastern waterway may have closed too soon, so we suggest the following modification to his hypothesis.

It seems likely that the common ancestor of the black-and-white diving shearwaters originated in the Tethys Ocean, since, unlike most other groups of petrels, they still have a wider distribution in that area than in

the southern hemisphere, and it is known that shearwaters were well represented there in the past (Olson 1985). Their subsequent evolution may have resulted from the progressive disruption of that ocean to give rise to a series of temporarily isolated water-masses in central Eurasia in the middle Tertiary, and then the North Atlantic and Pacific Oceans as the result of the formation of the Isthmus of Panama at the end of the Tertiary, as follows:

1. Probably the first development was the isolation of the ancestor of the most distinct derivatives, the closely related Little *P. assimilis* and Audubon's Shearwaters *P. lherminieri*, in an increasingly warm environment in the Indian Ocean about 15 million years ago, from where they have dispersed throughout the warmer seas.

2. The ancestor of the coastal brown-backed shearwaters may then also have become isolated in one of the central Eurasian water-masses, probably but not necessarily the Mediterranean (since there were other enclosed seas farther east) when it was temporarily cut off and partly dried out to form a series of shallow saline lagoons with fertile margins about five million years ago (Busson *et al.* 1980).

3. Meanwhile, the original stock survived in the largest remaining fragment of the Tethys Ocean, to give rise to the pelagic black-backed shearwaters, which now have a transequatorial migration in the Atlantic, but a bipolar distribution in the comparable parts of the Pacific.

4. By the time the connections between the Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the Black Seas were restored towards the end of the Tertiary, their shearwaters must have developed a sufficiently different ecology, movements and especially annual cycles to remain distinct.

5. It remains debatable whether the Mediterranean form of brown-backed shearwater may have succeeded in spreading to the Pacific area around the coasts of the last remnant of the Tethys Ocean, which was warmer than the modern northern oceans and probably more congenial to it, before the final closure of the Isthmus of Panama about two million years ago (Schmidt-Effing 1980), or whether very similar brown-backed forms may also have evolved in much the same manner there in the region of the Gulf of California and New Zealand.

If this analysis is correct, it would appear that these shearwaters have not only been familiar to man for rather a long time, but are in fact rather old European sibling species (much older than man), which originated during the formation of the continent. At least one of them, possibly both, has subsequently spread throughout the world, in much the same way that a Manx Shearwater *P. puffinus* ringed in Britain is still capable of reaching Australia (Thomson 1963), so that comparable pairs of oceanic and coastal representatives, and sometimes a third smaller ally as well, now occur in most warm, temperate seas.

Most of these shearwater populations have well-established vernacular names, but, if the Mediterranean forms *yelkouan* and *mauretanicus*—which have been referred to individually as the Levantine and Balearic Shearwaters—are combined to form a distinct species, it becomes necessary to devise a distinctive vernacular name that will cover both of them collectively. In the circumstances, it seems a pity that the historic name Halcyon has become indissolubly linked to the kingfishers (though apparently still perpetuated in the Turkish vernacular and scientific name *yelkouan*), and that the attractive alternative 'Mediterranean Shearwater' was applied for many years to a race of another species, now rather inappropriately termed, for similar reasons, Cory's Shearwater. It may therefore be best to fall back on the unmistakable modern Turkish vernacular and scientific name and call the species Yelkouan Shearwater.

It remains debatable whether the North Pacific forms are closely related to the European ones, or have evolved independently, although they are apparently very similar, differing morphologically only in all having slightly longer tails (table 1). Clearly, there is also a need for the investigation of such factors as the birds' biochemistry, voices (Dr Claude Chappuis reports, verbally, that there is a difference between the calls of *yelkouan* and *puffinus*), and parasites (Timmermann, 1965, reported that they also differ in their Mallophaga, and Guiguen & Monnat, 1983, 1985, and Dr C. Guiguen (verbally) that they differ in their Siphonaptera), to elucidate the details of their relationships. Since the European scientific names are older and take priority, this will, however, not affect European nomenclature. The southern forms which live in a very different environment among a greater variety of competitors have diverged much more markedly, and clearly deserve to be treated as distinct species.

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### Summary

The classical Halcyon, whose true identity is indicated by its local vernacular and scientific name *yelkouan*, is a rather tubby, brown-backed sibling species of the Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*, with a short tail, a big bill, prominent feet, a variable amount of dark marking on the underparts, and a fluttery flight. It may have evolved in the Mediterranean when it was cut off from the other oceans about five million years ago, and has developed as a more coastal species. It feeds inshore, nests early in the spring on offshore islands, and then migrates into higher latitudes to moult later in the summer. It is divisible into two races in Europe, including the small, white-breasted nominate *yelkouan* ('Levantine Shearwater'), which breeds around most of the Mediterranean, appears to migrate northeast towards the Black Sea and has never been proved to visit the Atlantic, and the large, often darker-breasted *mauretanicus* ('Balearic Shearwater'), which breeds in the Balearic Islands and migrates up and down the western coasts of Europe and Africa.

An intermediate form of uncertain status which has usually been treated as a distinct species, the Black-vented Shearwater *opisthomelas*, behaves similarly off the west coast of North America, and a more distinct ally, the Fluttering Shearwater *P. gavia*, carries out similar movements between northern New Zealand and southeast Australia. The Manx Shearwater and various allies have a similar distribution, but tend to occur farther out to sea, nest in hills inland, and migrate into or through lower latitudes to moult in the winter. The Little *P. assimilis* and Audubon's Shearwaters *P. lherminieri* may also derive from another population of the same ancestral stock which was cut off earlier in the Indian Ocean and has now spread throughout the warmer seas. In order to avoid confusion with names which have been used in other ways, it is suggested that *P. yelkouan* could be referred to as the Yelkouan Shearwater.

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# Mystery photographs

**133** Last month's mystery bird (plates 158' & 168) can be identified as either a bunting (Emberizidae), finch (Fringillidae) or sparrow (Passeridae) by the shape and size of its bill. The combination of small head relative to body size and bill shape identify this as a bunting.



This is confirmed by the 'face' patterning and the presence of white outer tail feathers which can just be seen in the photograph. A sparrow would show a larger head, relative to the body, and less of a face pattern. No sparrow (apart from Snowfinch *Montifringilla nivalis*) has white outer tail feathers, and few sparrows show the definite flank streaks of this bird. It is easier to separate from a finch, but it is more difficult to say why. Finches have either much stubbier or relatively massive bills, no finch shows this facial patterning, and most have a more deeply notched tail than that of the mystery bird.

From its plumage, it is either a juvenile, a female or one of the few buntings with a drab male plumage. It has no discernible eye-ring, and this immediately excludes the large number of buntings that show this as a typical feature. It has quite a large bill and only indistinct sub-moustachial and malar stripes, effectively ruling out Lapland *Calcarius lapponicus*, Black-faced *Emberiza spodocephala*, Rustic *E. rustica*, Reed *E. schoeniclus* and Pallas's Reed Buntings *E. pallasi*.

The shape of the head and bill and the head pattern also exclude Yellowhammer *E. citrinella* and Pine Bunting *E. leucocephalos*, both of which have a flat forehead, comparatively small bill and less distinct head pattern (male Pine excepted), and Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*, which has a stout bill, indistinct supercilium and prominent malar stripe, while it also lacks white outer tail feathers.



This narrows the possible species to four, these being two Western Palearctic breeders, Yellow-breasted Bunting *E. aureola* and Cirl Bunting *E. cirrus*, and two vagrants from the Eastern Palearctic, Yellow-browed Bunting *E. chrysophrys* and Chestnut Bunting *E. rutila*; the latter, however, has no white on the outer tail feathers, so can also be excluded.

The mystery bird shows a dark border to the ear-coverts, extending backwards from the eye around the rear edge and along the lower border to the bill. There is a pale submoustachial stripe, but this is neither prominent nor white. There is, however, a median crown stripe, and lateral crown stripes. The bill is long, conical and quite pale, and there are two whitish wing-bars. Yellow-breasted Bunting is the only species that shows all these features. Cirl has neither the crown stripes nor (apart from adult males) the continuous border to the ear-coverts, and Yellow-browed Bunting has a less contrasting dark-light pattern on mantle and scapulars, almost black lateral crown stripes, and the border to its ear-covert patch does not reach the bill.

The identification of this very drab adult female Yellow-breasted Bunting, which I photographed in June 1987 in Siberia, was made immeasurably easier by the fact that I watched it copulating with an adult male. Typical examples have strongly yellow-washed underparts and prominent pale 'braces' on the mantle.

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169. Mystery photograph 134. Identify the species. Answer next month.

## Seventy-five years ago...

'FULMAR PETREL BREEDING IN CO. KERRY. The rapid extension southwards of the breeding-range of the Fulmar Petrel (*Fulmarus g. glacialis*) is exemplified by its occurrence this year on the Great Skellig (seven hundred and ten feet high) off co. Kerry, latitude about  $51^{\circ} 48'$ . The Lightkeeper, Mr. McGinley, on May 26th, 1913, reported twelve pairs breeding, and desiring corroboration [*sic*] I wrote for one egg, which I have received to-day, June 24th. RICHARD M. BARRINGTON.' (*Brit. Birds* 7: 56, July 1913)

# Notes



**First record of 'Balearic Shearwater' for the Southern Hemisphere** In the skin collection of the Estación Biológica de Doñana, Spain, I discovered two specimens of the Balearic race of Manx (or Yelkouan) Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* (or *yelkouan*) *mauretanicus* (specimens EBD 2362A and EBD 2363A), reportedly collected at sea between 33°55'S 18°38'E and 34°15'S 18°38'E, off South Africa, on 29th September 1979. The labels stated also that the locality was 'South of Belville—in False Bay', and both individuals had been identified as Manx Shearwaters of the nominate race.

Specimen EBD 2362A is female and EBD 2363A is male. They appear to be adults of the pale/intermediate plumage type (cf. Yésou *et al.*, *Brit. Birds* 81: in prep.), and their measurements are all within the range given for this subspecies in *BWP* vol. 1. They are at exactly the same stage of moult, having three old primaries and the rest new or part-grown; the upperparts appear patchy, as would be expected.

All available cross-references indicate that the specimens are labelled correctly; and, although the co-ordinates may suggest a locality (33°55'S) on land, the exact location is described as being *off* Belville.

The previous southernmost records for this species (cf. Bourne *et al.*, *Brit. Birds* 81: 306-319) are two individuals near Madeira on 10th September 1986, and 210 off the Atlantic coast of Morocco down to 30°N during the first week of January 1987. (A record from 10°N in February 1985 remains unproved.) The two South African specimens, therefore, represent a considerable extension of the known range of this form.

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**Canada Geese nesting in tree** On 3rd May 1984, J. Ellis and I were shown an unusual nest of Canada Geese *Branta canadensis* (plate 170) by the head gamekeeper of an estate in Nottinghamshire. The nest was in the stump of an elm *Ulmus* about 4 m tall on the edge of a clump of tall trees some 200 m from a lake. At 2.7 m up the stump, there was a hollow, measuring 1.2 × 0.6 m, full of wood chippings; to these the goose had added a quantity of down, and she was sitting on five eggs. The gamekeeper thought that the site might have been chosen for protection against foxes *Vulpes vulpes*. I can find no reference to Canada Geese nesting above the ground.

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Dr M. A. Ogilvie has commented as follows: 'This is the first time I've heard of tree nesting in Britain, but it is entirely to be expected. In the USA, nesting in crowns of pollarded trees is commonplace, and this habit has been turned to advantage on reserves, where platforms, half-barrels and the like are placed on poles in the water and readily used by Canada Geese, getting them out of reach of raccoons *Procyon lotor*, which are one of the major nest predators there. There is a report of a nest 30 m up in the old nest of an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, and platforms in trees to 20 m are commonly used. This is widely



covered in North American literature, but was left out of *BLP* because it was not then known in the Western Palearctic. However, I covered it pretty thoroughly in *Wild Geese* (1978), so the information is available on this side of the Atlantic. Canadas also nest on cliff ledges, just like Barnacle Geese *B. leucopsis* in the Arctic. There is little evidence for predation by foxes *Vulpes vulpes* on Canada Goose nests in Britain, so, although the site might have given protection from foxes, it probably also gave shelter from the elements. Nesting under scrub or at the foot of trees is very normal—perhaps for this reason.' EDS

170. Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* on nest 2.7 m up stump of elm *Ulmus*, Nottinghamshire, May 1984 (R. A. Frost)

**Wigeon diving** It seems to be extremely unusual for Wigeons *Anas penelope* to dive, except when they are pinioned or injured. The only reference we can find is in *The Handbook*, where it is stated that 'diving for food appears to be quite exceptional, though recorded by Lilford'. It is, therefore, of interest to record the behaviour of two eclipse male Wigeons and one female or immature which we watched on the estuary at Frampton-on-Severn, Gloucestershire, on 12th September 1984. They were near a muddy ridge, which would be covered at high tide, and no vegetation was visible; predators were not present to cause panic. They were diving when we first saw them, and continued to do so at frequent intervals for about ten minutes; the dives were neat, lasting 10-15 seconds, and usually all three ducks were underwater together. There was no preliminary splashing or chasing, and preening was not noticed between dives; there were no other ducks in the vicinity. Eventually, the Wigeons left the water and settled near a pack of Teals *A. crecca*, where they stayed resting and preening. It seems reasonably certain that they were diving for food. *The Handbook* gives molluscs (small *Cardium*) in Scotland and insects in Iceland as the only exceptions to this species' normal diet of vegetable matter, but Bannerman (1958, *The Birds of the British Isles*, vol. 7) mentioned shrimps, snails and spawn of fish and frogs; *BLP* added no relevant items to this food information. SYBIL M. BUTLIN and KATHERINE M. BURKE

*Frocester Cottage, Frocester, Stonehouse, Gloucestershire GL10 3TE*

**Talon-locking between Hobby and Kestrel** On 28th April 1984, at Lake Mitrikou, northeast Greece, S. H. Holliday, P. Leonard, A. Roadhouse and I observed two Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* chasing a male Kestrel *F. tinnunculus*. One of the Hobbies then locked talons with the Kestrel and both raptors tumbled to the ground, calling and still locked together, at only 10 m from us; the Kestrel then flew up to a nearby small bush, but was soon chased off by the Hobby and pursued at low level by both Hobbies until out of sight. Although the Kestrel is known to be aggressive towards other raptors, BWP comments that it is 'usually tolerated or only swooped at playfully and escorted from territory'. The locking of talons with conspecific intruders has been reported, but talon-locking between different species apparently has not.

S. J. HAYHOW

42 Middlefield Road, Grange Estate, Rotherham, South Yorkshire S60 3JJ

**Winter feeding behaviour of Coot** BWP (vol. 2, page 603) states that the Coot *Fulica atra* 'Feeds, in flocks, on land (normally near water)—particularly late autumn to spring when wind causes high waves.' At Llanishen Reservoir, South Glamorgan, Coots graze the grass banks, predominantly in the period from mid December to March, when aquatic vegetation is in short supply; contrary to BWP, they tend to revert to feeding on the water when winds cause high waves and aquatic vegetation, disturbed from the reservoir floor, floats on the surface. The reason for bank-grazing may be food availability. I thank L. W. Austin for commenting on the above.

NIGEL ODIN

4 Y-Goedwig, Rhiwbina, Cardiff, South Glamorgan CF4 6UL

**Common Gulls successfully nesting on a roof in Aberdeen** In 1984, a pair of Common Gulls *Larus canus* raised two fledglings, from a clutch of three eggs, on a flat office roof at Total Oil Marine, Altens, Aberdeen. The roof has been used as a nest site by Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* since spring 1982, soon after the building was completed.

In the springs of 1982 and 1983, a pair of Common Gulls prospected the site, and roosted on the roof for most of the day during April and May; no serious attempts at either mating or nesting were made in these years. In April 1984, a pair returned and indulged in nest-building and pairing behaviour, including food-begging and copulation. Nest material was brought to the site and placed in a corner against a low balustrade which surrounds the roof. During this time, a pair of Oystercatchers laid two eggs on the roof. Little or no aggression was shown by either species towards the other; rather, they seemed both to benefit from the increased protection against Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* and Herring Gulls *L. argentatus* provided by the non-sitting birds. The Common Gulls laid three eggs around 12th-13th May, and incubation, undertaken by both sexes, lasted until 8th June, when all

three eggs hatched; one chick died at a week old, having become trapped between two pebbles, but the other two fledged successfully and left the nest site about 9th July.

This appears to be the first recorded instance in Britain of successful nesting by Common Gulls on a roof, although Cramp *et al.* (1974, *The Seabirds of Britain and Ireland*) mentioned a failed attempt in 1971 at Dalcross Airport, Inverness-shire. Common Gulls frequently use man-made sites in Scandinavia (e.g. Haftorn 1971, *Norges Fugler*), but Dutch and British pairs do not seem to do so.

M. A. SULLIVAN

14 Cairnside, Cults, Aberdeen

**Blackbird laying eggs on bare vegetation debris** In April 1984, in an area of mixed deciduous woodland near Hamilton, Strathclyde, I saw a female Blackbird *Turdus merula* fly hurriedly from the thick sprouting base of a lime tree *Tilia*. As I passed the tree, I peered in to check the nest, which would have been at about waist height. I found, however, that the four eggs had been laid on the flat area of decayed debris which accumulates in this type of tree; there was no nest material, nor even a hollow to receive the eggs, one of which had been tumbled down as the Blackbird left. Of the many small birds which find these growths very attractive nest sites, I have never found one that did not actually build a nest. Unfortunately, I do not know the fledging success or otherwise of this clutch.

J. C. MAXWELL

7 Lilac Hill, Hamilton, Strathclyde

The BTO's Nest Records Scheme apparently contains no comparable records (David Glue, verbally). EDS

**Iris colour of *Sylvia* warblers** The iris colour of *Sylvia* warblers is of interest since it varies predictably with age. The colours of the orbital ring and eye-ring also both vary with age, but are not discussed in this note.

The genus includes 17 species and about 60 subspecies, all of which breed in the Palearctic, particularly in the south and central Western Palearctic. In 1985, the International Birdwatching Center at Eilat, Israel, started a research project into the identification of all *Sylvia* species, both in the field and in the hand. Part of this information will be published in *British Birds*, and this note concentrates on eight of the lesser-known species.

The iris colour of Desert Warbler *S. nana* (plate 171) is yellow at all ages, including the juvenile, although there is a thin greenish-orange circle in the iris up to the end of the first winter.

The iris colour of juvenile and first-winter Spectacled Warblers *S. conspicillata* is dark olive, changing through intermediate shades of brown and olive until, by their second summer, full adults have a reddish-brown iris (plate 173).

The iris colour of juvenile Arabian Warbler *S. leucomelaena* is dark brown

171. Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana*172. Arabian Warbler *Sylvia leucomelaena*173. Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*174. Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis*

171-174. Adult male *Sylvia* warblers, Israel, January 1987 (top left), December 1986 (bottom left, top right) and March 1987 (bottom right) (*H. Shirihai*)

with an olive shade, but in adult plumage, from the second summer onwards, it is brown with grey specks (plate 172); there are several intermediate forms as individuals age.

The iris of juvenile Orphean Warbler *S. hortensis* is dark olive-brown; and ageing produces many intermediate shades, but adult males have a brown iris containing a cream-white ring (plate 174). On adult females, this cream ring is not complete, and the iris appears brown with cream specks.

Juvenile Cyprus Warbler *S. melanothorax* has an olive-coloured iris; a wide range of intermediate shades can be seen on individuals of different ages, but adults from the second summer have reddish-brown irides (plate 175).

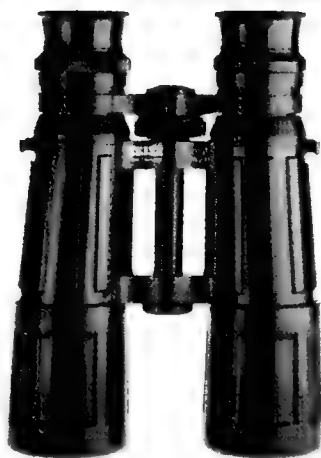
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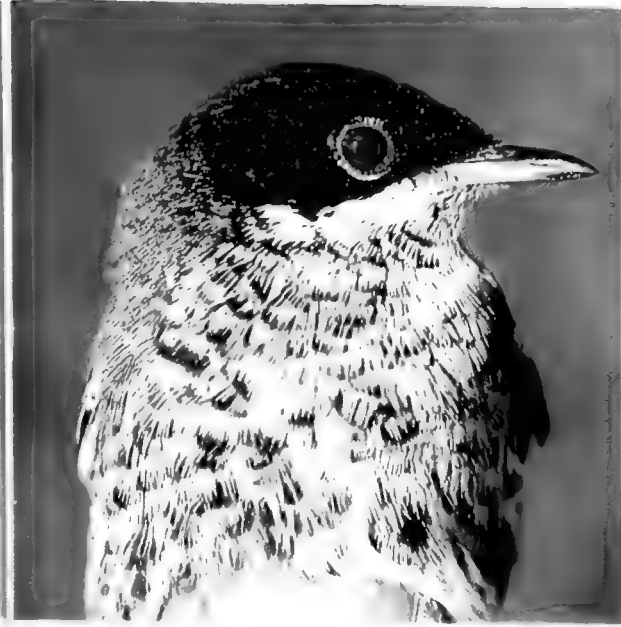
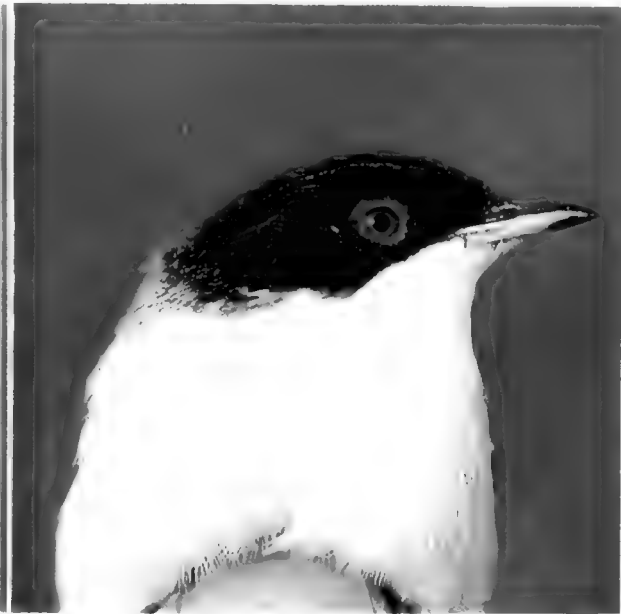
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175. Cyprus Warbler *Sylvia melanothorax*176. Menétries's Warbler *Sylvia mystacea*177. Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*178. Rüppell's Warbler *Sylvia rueppelli*

175-178. Adult male *Sylvia* warblers, Israel, February (top left and bottom left) and March 1987 (bottom right); and Turkey, July 1987 (top right) (*H. Shirhai*)

The iris colour of juvenile Sardinian Warbler *S. melanocephala* is olive, changing through several intermediate shades to a deep reddish/orange-brown on adults from their second summer onwards (plate 177).

The iris colour of Ménétries's Warbler *S. mystacea* mirrors that of Sardinian for all ages (plate 176).

The iris colour of Rüppell's Warbler *S. rueppelli* is similar to that of Whitethroat *S. communis*, except that, from the third summer, it attains a dark orangey-red (plate 178) similar to that of Sardinian Warbler.

I am very interested in receiving information, comments and suitable

photographs regarding the genus *Sylvia*, at the address below.

HADORAM SHIRIHAI

*Israeli Rarities Committee, PO Box 4168, Eilat 88102, Israel*

**Transfer of egg between Starling nestboxes** Eggs of Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* are sometimes found intact on the ground. While the popular explanation for this is that a female was 'taken short' and had to lay outside the nest, recent observations, using eggs individually marked with small spots of nail varnish, have shown that eggs on the ground have in fact been removed from nests (Feare, 1984, *The Starling*). Starlings have been observed carrying eggs in their bills and there is little doubt that the eggs are removed by Starlings, but it is not yet known whether removal is by one of the nest-owners or by an intruder. The removal of eggs after a nest has been deserted is, however, a normal part of nest-cleaning by the male owning the nest site (Verheyen, 1980, in *Bird Problems in Agriculture*).

'Foreign' eggs also appear in nests. These are usually revealed by the appearance of two eggs in a nest on one day (Starlings lay only one per day), or by the appearance in a nest of an egg different in colour from that of the rest of the clutch; these eggs are laid by females other than the nest-owner, although exactly which females are responsible for this intraspecific nest parasitism (Yom-Tov *et al.*, 1974, *Ibis* 116: 87-90) is unknown.

During the 1984 breeding season, in a nestbox colony of Starlings at Worplesdon, Surrey, we found another source of foreign eggs. On the day of laying, each egg in each box was rendered individually identifiable by a spot of nail varnish. During a routine daily inspection on 16th April, box *A*, in which laying had begun on 14th April, was found to be deserted and one egg was missing. This latter egg was found in box *B*, together with the four eggs of the clutch that was started on 13th April. On 17th April, the female of box *B* completed her clutch, which thus consisted of five of her own eggs plus the one from box *A*; of these six eggs, four hatched and produced fledged young, but we do not know whether the foreign egg was one of the successful ones.

Boxes *A* and *B* are 18 m apart, but there were four other occupied boxes within this distance of box *A*. The identity of the Starling that transferred the egg from box *A* to box *B* is not known, but the most likely candidate is probably the male from box *A*, who would commence cleaning soon after his mate deserted (Verheyen, 1980). The transfer of an egg from one nest to another has not been observed previously in our studies, which began in 1976, and it is probably therefore rare. Nevertheless, whichever Starling was responsible, this previously undescribed aspect of behaviour adds a further complication to studies of Starling breeding biology in general and intraspecific nest parasitism in particular.

C. J. FEARE and NOREEN MCGINNITY

*MAFF, Worplesdon Laboratory, Tangley Place, Worplesdon, Surrey GU3 3LQ*

# Letters

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**Hong Kong birding** I refer to the note 'Oh to be in . . . Hong Kong' in 'News and comment' (*Brit. Birds* 80: 391). WWF Hong Kong is delighted that news of the success of our Mai Po Marshes Wildlife Education Centre and Nature Reserve is being spread far and wide. Before thousands of birders rush to their travel agents to book flights to the land of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmaeus*, however, we wish to point out that access to the Mai Po Marshes is controlled by the Director of Agriculture and Fisheries. All visitors must possess a written permit. The number of permits issued is limited, so prospective visitors are recommended to apply for one well in advance of their proposed visit by writing to: The Director, Agriculture and Fisheries Department, 393 Canton Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong, giving details of date(s) of visit, name and passport number.

WWF Hong Kong has spent over £1 million on land acquisition, habitat management, and the provision of access paths, hides and an Education Centre. We are not in a position to charge for use of these facilities, but expect visiting birders to show their appreciation through a donation.

We look forward to welcoming many *BB* readers in the future.

DAVID S. MELVILLE

WWF Hong Kong, GPO Box 12721, The French Mission, 1 Battery Path, Central,  
Hong Kong

**Dead hirundines in nests** Multiple corpses of hirundines in one nest, as described by Peter Wilkinson for House Martins *Delichon urbica* in Bedfordshire in 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 577), is an event which has been recorded previously in cold spring weather in California. DuBowy & Moore (*Western Birds* 16: 49-50) found six nests of Cliff Swallows *Hirundo pyrrhonota* in May 1982 containing dead birds. On examination, two nests were opened and found to contain six and seven decomposed corpses. The bodies were so arranged in each nest as to suggest that the last bird to enter was caught in the narrow entrance, thus trapping the others inside. The deaths of the Bedfordshire birds in early summer probably coincided with the dull, cold and wet May of 1983, when mean temperatures at Bedford were 1.3°C below average, and rainfall 91% above average. The coldest spell in the area appeared to be from 9th to 11th May, when daytime temperatures did not reach much above 10°C, and night minimum temperatures fell to 2°C. DuBowy & Moore blamed the 1982 deaths in California on similar weather in late March and early April, when almost identical temperatures to those in Bedford were recorded. Huddling in nests and cavities is one means by which hirundines conserve energy over short periods of a day or two, but they rapidly succumb if food shortages continue for longer periods.

NORMAN ELKINS

18 Scotstarvit View, Cupar, Fife KY15 4DX

# European news

With this twenty-third selection, we are again delighted to be able to include records from 26 countries, and to welcome the first contribution from the Ukraine SSR. New contacts in unrepresented West Palearctic countries will be very welcome. The official correspondents whose detailed six-monthly reports are summarised here are acknowledged at the end. This feature is intended as a news service; anyone requiring further information or quoting records in other publications should refer to the literature of the relevant country.

If you have made observations in any of the countries not included here and do not know to whom records should be sent, we suggest you send them to *British Birds*, and we shall do our best to pass them on to the appropriate person; for countries which are included here, we suggest that you send a copy of your records to the relevant 'European news' correspondent listed at the end of this summary.

Records awaiting formal verification by national rarities committees are indicated by an asterisk (\*).

Unless otherwise stated, all records refer to single individuals

**Great Northern Diver** *Gavia immer* ITALY  
Eighth record: in summer plumage at Piedmont on 21st June 1986.

**White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC Vagrant: found dead at Stralsund on 5th April 1985, and juvenile near Wismar on 23rd March 1986.

**Slavonian Grebe** *Podiceps auritus* HUNGARY  
Increased occurrence: near Szob on 12th December 1987; total remains below 20, but occurrence nearly annual now.

**Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis* NORWAY  
Ninth record: Østensjøvann, Oslo, during 16th-20th May 1986.

**Manx Shearwater** *Puffinus puffinus* DENMARK  
Third record of *P. p. mauretanicus*: Skagen medio in September 1987. GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC Vagrant: Rügen on 13th October 1985. UKRAINE SSR First record in West region: Mychovska Lake, Volyn', on 13th July 1984.

**Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis* ISRAEL  
First record of *P. a. baroli*: Ma'agab Michael beach on 23rd January 1988.

**Leach's Petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* SWEDEN  
Record numbers: 250 along West Coast during 11th-20th September 1987, with maximum of 81 past Skälderviken on 16th (cf. *Brit. Birds* 77: 233).

**Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* MOROCCO  
Third record: adult off Salé on 8th November 1987. SPAIN First and second records: adult at Benalmádena on 28th May 1983, and immature at Torremolinos on 9th September 1986.

**Cape Gannet** *Sula capensis* MOROCCO Correction: first records (*Brit. Birds* 80: 321) now rejected.

**Gannet** *Sula bassana* LATVIAN SSR Fourth and fifth records: Pape in spring and autumn 1987. POLAND Fourth record: adult at Vistula estuary on 29th August 1987 (first since 1904).

**Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo* AUSTRIA First breeding since 1971: pair at Rhine Delta, Vorarlberg in 1987 (cf. *Brit. Birds* 80: 321-322). ISRAEL Highest-ever winter total: 2,000 in country during winter 1987/88. ITALY Winter population increase: 4,000-4,500 in centre and south in January 1986 census. POLAND Breeding population increase: 4,200 nests in 1987, compared with 1,465 nests in 1981; largest colony 2,044 nests in Kąty Rybackie.

**Shag** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* SWITZERLAND  
Eighth to tenth records: Lake Constance on 9th November 1986 and 9th March 1987, Rhine on 1st February 1987.

**Pygmy Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*



**UKRAINE SSR** Fourth record for West Region: 5th August 1985.

**White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* DENMARK First record: Dovns Klint on 27th October 1987. SWEDEN Vagrant: adult at several sites during 2nd-20th October 1987; perhaps escapee.

**Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* MOROCCO First recent winter record: Oued Massa from 29th December 1987 to 1st January 1988.

**American Bittern** *Botaurus lentiginosus* SPAIN Second record: Traba Lagoon, Laxe, during 17th-30th October 1982 (first was in 1962). (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* CANARY ISLANDS Unusual concentration: flock of 21 on passage on Fuerteventura on 1st April 1987.

**Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* ITALY First breeding in Sardinia: two pairs in 1985 and four pairs in 1986 at Molentargius pool. MOROCCO Unusually large winter flock: 18 near Merja Zerga on 25th January.

**Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* SWEDEN First record; found dead at Åkersberga, Stockholm, on 19th July 1987, ringed as chick near Cadiz, Spain, on 17th June 1986.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* FINLAND Fifth and sixth records: Hailuoto on 20th October 1983, and Kemiö on 26th June 1986.

**Black-headed Heron** *Ardea melanocephala* ISRAEL First record: first-winter near Eilat from 19th October to early December 1987.

**Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* FRANCE Large autumn movement: probably over 200 involved throughout country in autumn 1987 (cf. *Brit. Birds* 80: 322). GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC Population estimate: stable at 40 pairs. SPAIN Census: 150 pairs in 1987.

**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* FINLAND Second record: Perho during 17th-23rd October 1987\* (first was in 1830s). ITALY First breeding in Sardinia: five to six pairs in 1985 and three pairs in 1986 at Molentargius pool. MOROCCO Influx: eight at Massa on 15th April 1987, three at Larache on 15th November 1987, three at Salé on 18th November 1987, two at Oued Chebeika on 6th January 1988, and two at Moulay Bouselham on 25th January 1988. SWEDEN

Thirteenth record: southern Öland on 19th October 1987.

**Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Now regularly breeding: annual since 1984 at reservoir in southern Moravia (cf. *Brit. Birds* 78: 639), also in eastern Slovakia in 1985, and southern Bohemia in 1987.

**Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus ruber* CANARY ISLANDS Increased records: two at Janubio, Lanzarote, on 5th March 1987 and a first-year at same site on 31st March 1987 (cf. *Brit. Birds* 80: 322).

**Bewick's Swan** *Cygnus columbianus* GREECE Third record: adult in Evros Delta on 4th February 1988. HUNGARY Third to eighth records: adult and five juveniles in Kiskung-sági National Park on 13th-14th February 1988 (first two records were in nineteenth century and 1975). UKRAINE SSR First and second records in West region: four adults and ten immatures at Lucimer Lake, Volyn', on 22nd November 1986, and nine adults and one immature at same site on 21st November 1987.

**Lesser White-fronted Goose** *Anser erythropus* ISRAEL Second record: nine wintered in Beit Shean Valley from December 1987 to January 1988.

**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser* GIBRALTAR Fourth record: seven flying north on 9th November 1987.

**Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis* LATVIAN SSR Fourteenth record: flock of six on Lake Liepājas in January 1988; first recorded in 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 268).

**Brent Goose** *Branta bernicla* HUNGARY Thirty-first record of *B. b. nigricans*: immature near Szob on 14th November 1987.

**American Wigeon** *Anas americana* FINLAND Fourth record: male at Virolahti on 24th May 1987.

**Baikal Teal** *Anas formosa* POLAND First record: adult male at Biebrza Marshes on 27th May 1987.

**Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* FINLAND Third record: male at Säppi bird-station on 13th June 1987.

**Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* MOROCCO Fifth record: male at Oued El Ouair mouth on 26th January 1988.

**Eider** *Somateria mollissima* GREECE Fifth record: pair in Evros Delta on 5th February 1988.

**King Eider** *Somateria spectabilis* SPAIN First record: adult male in Ebro Delta on 21st June 1987\*.

**Steller's Eider** *Polysticta stelleri* NETHERLANDS Third record: male at Leylstad, Flevoland, on 28th January 1987. POLAND Highest-ever total: 97 in winter/spring 1987, including peak of 65 at Cape Rozewie.

**Harlequin Duck** *Histrionicus histrionicus* POLAND Third record: adult male near Leszno on 29th March 1987 is first twentieth-century record.

**Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra* SPAIN First record of *M. n. americana*: adult male at Navia estuary on 1st November 1986.

**Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis* DENMARK Third record: male at Vejlerne on 8th September 1987, probably same individual as at Tofte So (*Brit. Birds* 81: 15, erroneously quoted as female).

**Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* SWITZERLAND Tenth record: Echarlens-Fontanoux on 27th June 1986 (record quoted *Brit. Birds* 81: 16 becomes ninth).

**Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus* MOROCCO Exceptional numbers: flock of 37 near Ouezane on 14th November 1987.

**Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* SWEDEN Influx: at least five during 3rd-27th September 1987; annual total is usually one to three.

**Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus* AUSTRIA Increased vagrancy: Rhine Delta, Vorarlberg, on 17th June 1987, and two near Grossmittel, Lower Austria, on 8th August 1987. FINLAND First record: emaciated individual in Savonlinna on 28th September 1987, flown to Spain after care. SWEDEN Second record: juvenile at Höllviken and Falsterbo on 3rd September 1987; previous record was in 1973/74.

**Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Aquila pomarina* FRANCE Fifth record this century: Cantal on 5th September 1987. SWITZERLAND Third record: Col de Bretolet on 22nd September 1986.

**Tawny/Steppe Eagle** *Aquila rapax* SWEDEN First and fourteenth records: immature *Aquila* at Falsterbo on 22nd August 1964 now accepted as this species, and subadult in

southeastern Skåne from 20th December 1987 to 10th January 1988.

**Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca* SWEDEN Eighth record: adult at Falsterbo on 16th September 1987.

**Booted Eagle** *Hieraetus pennatus* SWITZERLAND Eighth to tenth records: Lauwil on 30th September 1986, Chavornay on 19th April 1987, and La Chaux-de-Fonds from 5th September to 3rd October 1987.

**Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* MOROCCO Third winter record: Merja Zerga on 21st December 1986.

**Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonora* YUGOSLAVIA First record for Slovenia: adult at Sečovlje on 21st August 1987.

**Hazel Grouse** *Bonasa bonasia* GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC Last records: 1973 and 1977 only.

**Black Grouse** *Tetrao tetrix* GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC Population decrease: 100 remain, including one population of 30 in lowlands (cf. decline in Netherlands, *Brit. Birds* 77: 235).

**Capercaillie** *Tetrao urogallus* GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC Population estimate: 120 individuals in the south.

**Crane** *Grus grus* SPAIN Record passage at Gallocanta lagoon: 19,000 on 12th November 1986, and 22,600 on 6th March 1987.

**Demoiselle Crane** *Anthropoides virgo* FINLAND Sixth record: Tornio on 23rd June 1986.

**Little Bustard** *Tetrax tetrax* NETHERLANDS Fourth record since 1983: Zuidland, Zuidholland, on 28th January 1987.

**Great Bustard** *Otis tarda* GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC Population decrease: reduced by 70% between 1965 and 1985, now being 460 individuals.

**Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* POLAND Second inland breeding: nest at Słońsk Reservoir in 1987.

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* CANARY ISLANDS Highest-ever number: flock of 20 on Fuerteventura on 31st March 1987.

**Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta* ITALY First breeding on Sicily: four to six pairs in Trapani's salt-pans on 19th June 1986.

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* NORWAY Northernmost breeding: pair nested at Steinkjer, Nord-Trøndelag (64°N), in July 1987.

**Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* UKRAINE SSR First record: Zmieeny Island in Black Sea on 27th May 1951.

**Sociable Plover** *Chettusia gregaria* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Sixth record: three in flock of Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* near Přerov, central Moravia, on 4th April 1985 (cf. *Brit. Birds* 79: 287). SWITZERLAND Third record: Cossonsay on 10th April 1987.

**Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris* DENMARK First record: Skagen on 7th October 1987. GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC First record: adult in summer plumage on 1st August 1987.

**Western Sandpiper** *Calidris mauri* SPAIN First record: juvenile at Ensenada de la Insua, La Coruña, on 8th September 1979\*.

**Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis* NETHERLANDS First record: Lauwersmeer, Groningen, on 29th May 1987.

**White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* AUSTRIA Fourth record: Rhine Delta, Vorarlberg, on 18th October 1987. SPAIN Third record: adult at Ensenada de la Insua during 19th-25th August 1985\*.

**Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* GREECE First record: adult near Corinth on 21st August 1986.

**Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* HUNGARY First record: near Szabadszállás from 27th September to 1st October 1987.

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC Population estimate: 80 pairs in coastal district.

**Jack Snipe** *Limnocyptes minimus* NORWAY Population estimate: 110 pairs breeding in 1982-84, mostly in Finnmark.

**Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* GIBRALTAR Second record: 4th November 1987.

**Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* FINLAND Exceptional autumn numbers: approximately 140 records, mainly in east to southeast, in 1987.

**Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* SWEDEN Eighth record: Getterön from 2nd October to 15th November 1987.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* NORWAY Population estimate: 1,300 pairs, all in Finnmark. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Slender-billed Curlew** *Numenius tenuirostris* MOROCCO Winter count: three at Merja Zerga and one at Merja Oulad Khallouf were total found in January 1988 waterfowl census (cf. nine at Merja Bokka on 21st January 1987, *Brit. Birds* 80: 325).

**Upland Sandpiper** *Bartramia longicauda* FRANCE Fourth record: Ouessant on 21st September 1987\*.

**Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus* NORWAY Population estimate: 5,000 pairs, all in Finnmark. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* FRANCE First record: Baie de Seine, Seine-Maritime, on 26th-27th August 1987\*. POLAND Second record: Mietków Reservoir near Wrocław on 25th September 1987 (first was in August 1986). SPAIN First record: adult at Ensenada de la Insua on 2nd September 1983\*.

**Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* HUNGARY Ninth record: adult on Hortobágy 'Académia-tó' during 21st-28th July 1986 is the second in July; most others have been in September. SWITZERLAND Second record: Lake Klingnau on 29th and 31st August 1987. UKRAINE SSR First record in West region: Volyń on 3rd October 1986.

**Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* FRANCE First record: juvenile at Pont-Croix, Finistère, from 24th September-7th November 1987. SWEDEN First record: Halmstad on 27th-28th August 1987\*.

**Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* HUNGARY Eighteenth record: near Tömörkény on 25th August 1986. NORWAY First in Inner Oslofjord since 1987: Asker, Akershus, on 1st November 1986 is about thirtieth record for country.

**Great Skua** *Stercorarius skua* GREECE Correction: first record quoted *Brit. Birds* 80: 325 is actually second.

**Great Black-headed Gull** *Larus ichthyaetus* ISRAEL Highest-ever wintering numbers: 800 in north during winter 1987/88. UKRAINE SSR First record in West region: Lviv on 15th August 1985 (cf. recent records in Greece, Spain and Cyprus, *Brit. Birds* 79: 288; 80: 325; 81: 18).

**Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* FRANCE Seventh record: Dunkerque during August and September 1987. SPAIN Fourth and fifth records: subadult at Ebro Delta on 8th-9th July 1987\* and immature at Benalmádena, Málaga, on 17th August 1987\*.

**Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* NETHERLANDS First record: Noordbrabant from 8th June to 11th July 1987.

**Sabine's Gull** *Larus sabini* GIBRALTAR First record: adult on 7th November 1987 (cf. British records *Brit. Birds* 81: 86-97).

**Bonaparte's Gull** *Larus philadelphia* FRANCE Second record: immature on Ouessant on 22nd October 1987\*.

**Slender-billed Gull** *Larus genei* POLAND First record: adult at Vistula estuary during 19th-26th July 1987. UKRAINE SSR First record: Kanev, Dnipro River, on 15th October 1950.

**Audouin's Gull** *Larus audouinii* ITALY New colony: about 40 pairs in Tuscany archipelago. SWITZERLAND Third record: Lake Constance on 10th December 1986. GIBRALTAR High autumn numbers: westward movement of 1,414 between July and September 1987 is second-best autumn ever (cf. increases in Spain, *Brit. Birds* 80: 12; 81: 18).

**Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* POLAND Second and third records: first-winters at Gdynia on 25th February 1985, and Hel on 19th January 1987 (first was in April 1984 *Brit. Birds* 78: 641-642).

**Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus* AUSTRIA First breeding of *L. a. cachinnans*: two pairs in Seewinkel, Burgenland, in 1987, of which one raised young.

**Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus* MOROCCO Correction: seventh record was on 6th April 1987, not 28th March 1987 (*Brit. Birds* 81: 18).

**Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* FINLAND Third record: second-winter tideline corpse in Hanko on 14th February 1988.

**Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla* LATVIAN SSR Fourth record: near Riga in December 1986.

**Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* GIBRALTAR Sixth record: 14th October 1987.

**Lesser Crested Tern** *Sterna bengalensis* MOROCCO Large autumn concentration: flock of 39, together with 21 Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis*, at Oualidia on 15th October 1987.

**Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis* CANARY ISLANDS Largest-ever flock: approximately 500 at Arrecife, Lanzarote, on 24th March 1987.

**Roseate Tern** *Sterna dougallii* POLAND First record: adult in Gdańsk Bay on 10th October 1987.

**Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea* UKRAINE SSR First record in West region: Lucimer lake on 6th September 1985.

**Bridled Tern** *Sterna anaethetus* FRANCE Second record: in colony of Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis* at Arcachon, Gironde, on 7th July 1987\* (cf. first record, *Brit. Birds* 80: 326).

**Sooty Tern** *Sterna fuscata* SPAIN Correction: record at La Coruña was on 20th-21st June 1981, not 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 19).

**Little Tern** *Sterna albifrons* GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC Population estimate: approximately 100 pairs. MOROCCO Increased wintering: regular wintering at Sidi-Moussa/Oualidia area since 1976, three on 27th December 1986, one on 16th January 1988.

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus* CANARY ISLANDS First record for Gran Canaria: 19th September 1987. DENMARK Seventh record: Vejlerne on 20th October 1987. FINLAND Second record: Kitee on 11th June 1987. MOROCCO Unusually large winter flock: 20 at Sidi-Moussa on 25th December 1987.

**Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger* CANARY ISLANDS First records for Lanzarote and Gran Canaria: two first-years and one adult on Lanzarote on 17th and 20th September 1987, and single on Gran Canaria on 19th September 1987. MOROCCO Largest-ever winter flock: 22 at Sidi-Moussa on 25th December 1987.

**White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucop-terus* MOROCCO Second winter record: two at Sidi-Moussa on 25th December 1987.

**Razorbill** *Alca torda* AUSTRIA First record: immature in Rhine Delta, Vorarlberg, on 14th March 1987. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Little Auk** *Alle alle* SWEDEN Increasing autumn/winter records: highest daily count 385 at Varberg on 13th November 1987 (cf. *Brit. Birds* 79: 288; 80: 326). UKRAINE SSR First record: 7th November 1981.

**Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* YUGOSLAVIA First confirmed breeding: partially fledged young at Skadar Lake on 20th July 1982 is only fourteenth record.

**Eagle Owl** *Bubo bubo* ITALY Extinct in Sicily: none in 1987.

**Great Grey Owl** *Strix nebulosa* POLAND First record since 1953: Białowieża Forest during 3rd-26th May 1987.

**Plain Swift** *Apus unicolor* MOROCCO Sixth and seventh records: Massa on 7th January 1987, and Akhfennir on 5th January 1988.

**Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* NORWAY Fifteenth record: Trysil, Hedmark, on 13th May 1986. POLAND Northerly breeding: two pairs in 1986 and 1987 at Choczewo, near Baltic coast.

**Roller** *Coracias garrulus* GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC Continued population decline: from 135 pairs in 1961 and 15 pairs in 1980 to five pairs in 1985.

**Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC Population estimate: no more than 100 pairs.

**White-backed Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos leucotos* NORWAY Population estimate: 500-1,000 pairs in west, but approaching extinction in east, owing to modern forestry practices.

**Three-toed Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos tridactylus* DENMARK Eighth record: male at Skagen during 5th-8th November 1987 is first record since 1966. NORWAY Invasion: recorded in south and at coastal observatories in autumn 1987; 20 at Jomfruland, Telemark, and

eight to ten at Mølen, Vestfold. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Calandra Lark** *Melanocorypha calandra* FINLAND Fourth record: Dragsfjärd on 25th May 1986. YUGOSLAVIA First record for Slovenia: singing male at Ankaran during May to June 1987.

**Hume's Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella acutirostris* ISRAEL First record: trapped at Eilat on 4th February. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Woodlark** *Lullula arborea* GIBRALTAR Fifth to ninth records: total of 18 individuals on five dates in October 1987.

**Shore Lark** *Eremophila alpestris* FINLAND Declining numbers: 28 to 81 migrants per year in south in 1980s compared with several hundreds in 1950s; breeding population 'some tens of pairs, at most'.

**Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* POLAND Second record: 13th April 1987 at Solina (first was in May 1982, *Brit. Birds* 76: 275)(cf. British records in 1987, *Brit. Birds* 80: 392-399, 457-463; 81: 86-97).

**Richard's Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* DENMARK Influx: 15-20 records in autumn 1987 compared with previous total of 28.

**Blyth's Pipit** *Anthus godlewskii* ISRAEL First record: Eilat during 7th-16th November 1987.

**Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* DENMARK Second record: Skallingen on 16th November 1987. FRANCE First record: Ouessant on 31st October 1987. POLAND Correction: individual on 27th April 1985 (*Brit. Birds* 81: 20) was second spring record (first was on 1st-2nd May 1984 at Justarnia).

**Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* UKRAINE SSR First to third records in West region: 11th December 1982, 14th September 1984, and 15th October 1985.

**Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* SPAIN First record: male at Porto Pollensia, Mallorca, during 15th-18th April 1987\*. SWEDEN Highest-ever annual total: eight in 1987, mainly associated with influx of other Siberian species from 30th August to 26th

October. UKRAINE SSR First and second records in West region: breeding in Ternopol during June to July 1985; Lviv on 14th August 1986.

**Siberian Accentor** *Prunella montanella* SWEDEN Second to sixth records: Stenåsa, Öland on 18th October, Segerstad, Öland, during 22nd-28th October and another during 24th-28th October, Svenska Högarna, Uppland, during 21st-28th October, and Ottenby on 25th October, all in 1987; first record was in 1976 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 256).

**Black-throated Accentor** *Prunella atrogularis* FINLAND First record: Helsinki on 19th October 1987 (plates 179-181).



179-181. Black-throated Accentor *Prunella atrogularis*, Finland, October 1987 (above & right, Asko Rokala; below, Pekka Komi.)



**Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia* SWITZERLAND Fifth record: trapped at Monte Cazio on 31st August 1987.

**Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Population increase: several tens of localities occupied by white-spotted *L. s. cyaneula*, especially in southern and western Bohemia; red-spotted *L. s. svecica* has bred in Krkonoše mountains since 1978 (cf. recent breeding in Austria, Romania, Switzerland, Spain and Italy, *Brit. Birds* 71: 585; 73: 577; 76: 275; 78: 344; 79: 289).

**Siberian Blue Robin** *Luscinia cyane* SWEDEN First record: juvenile at Stenåsa, Öland, on 13th October 1987\*. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus* POLAND First record: Czorsztyn in Pieniny Mountains on 9th August 1987 (cf. recent Swedish records, *Brit. Birds* 81: 20).

**Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata* FINLAND Second record of *S. t. rubicola/hibernans*: male in Kristinestad on 19th July 1986.

**Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* FINLAND First record: female at Lågskär on 19th October 1979. MOROCCO First record: two males near Beni-Tajjit on 28th December 1987\*. SWEDEN First and second records: trapped at Umeå on 27th-28th September 1987\*, and Holmsund during 23rd-31st October 1987\*.

**Black-eared Wheatear** *Oenanthe hispanica* FINLAND First record: Espoo during 24th October to 1st November 1987. POLAND First



record: adult female at Jastarnia on Hel Peninsula on 9th September 1986.

**Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* DENMARK First and second records: male at Vest Stadil Fjord during 24th-26th October 1987 and female at Ishøj Strand on 1st-2nd November 1987. FRANCE Sixth record: male on Ouessant during 23rd-31st October 1987\* is first outside south. GIBRALTAR First record: male on 3rd September 1987.

**Finsch's Wheatear** *Oenanthe finschii* MOROCCO First record: pair at Oued Massa Dam on 8th April 1987\*. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**White's Thrush** *Zoothera dauma* FRANCE Fourth twentieth-century record: Ouessant during 19th-23rd October 1987\*.

**Cetti's Warbler** *Cettia cetti* NETHERLANDS Absence: no records in 1986 or 1987, despite records in 1970s and earlier in 1980s (cf. population crash in France, *Brit. Birds* 81: 20).

**Fan-tailed Warbler** *Cisticola juncidis* NETHERLANDS Absence: no records in 1987, despite one or two in 1986 and small numbers in earlier years (cf. population crashes in France and Yugoslavia, *Brit. Birds* 78: 643; 81: 20).

**Graceful Warbler** *Prinia gracilis* CYPRUS First and second records: Episkopi on 12th October 1987, and near Paphos on 5th December 1987\*. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola* FRANCE First record: Ouessant on 31st August 1987\*.

**Lanceolated Warbler** *Locustella lanceolata* FINLAND Tenth record: Kalvola on 3rd September 1987. SWEDEN Second record: dead at Hoburgen on 19th October 1987 (first was also found dead at Hoburgen, in 1939, cf. *Brit. Birds* 81: 20).

**River Warbler** *Locustella fluviatilis* NORWAY Twelfth to fourteenth records: singing males at Børsesjø, Telemark, during 6th-17th June 1986, Borre, Vestfold, on 22nd June 1986, and Nittedal, Akershus, during 20th-23rd June 1987.

**Moustached Warbler** *Acrocephalus melanopogon* GIBRALTAR Second and third records: 9th\* and 29th September 1987.

**Aquatic Warbler** *Acrocephalus paludicola* FRANCE Large autumn movement: tens ringed, mainly on west coast during August 1987 (cf. *Brit. Birds* 80: 328). GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC Population estimate: two populations of 30 to 40 pairs in northeast.

**Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* LATVIAN SSR First record: trapped at Pape in July 1987. SWEDEN Seventh record: Seby, Öland, on 26th-27th October 1987.

**Booted Warbler** *Hippolais caligata* BELGIUM First record: Zeebrugge on 3rd-4th October 1987\*. ESTONIAN SSR First and second records: two singing males on 14th June 1987\* at Jõgeva, and one singing male on 21st June 1987\* at Tartu.

**Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* SWITZERLAND Fourth and fifth records: Meiringen on 29th-30th April 1987, and Follatterres on 2nd-9th May 1987.

**Desert Warbler** *Sylvia nana* FINLAND Fifth record: Turku from 30th October to 3rd November 1987. SWEDEN Seventh to ninth records: Stenåsa during 19th-22nd October 1987, Bröttorp, Öland, on 20th-21st October 1987, and Holmsund, Västerbotten, on 29th October 1987.

**Green Warbler** *Phylloscopus nitidus* ISRAEL First record: Eilat on 27th October 1987. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* BELGIUM First record: Zeebrugge on 1st September 1987\*. UKRAINE SSR First record in West region: Lviv on 3rd October 1986.

**Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis* FRANCE Second record: trapped on Ouessant on 16th September 1987\*. MALTA First record: ringed in October 1987.

**Pallas's Warbler** *Phylloscopus proregulus* DENMARK Large influx: at least 15 in autumn 1987, of which 11 were at Christiansø during 1st-23rd October. MALTA First record: trapped in November 1987. SWEDEN Highest annual total: 42 during September to November 1987. UKRAINE SSR First record: Zmieny Island in October 1980.



**Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* BELGIUM Influx: ten records on coast during 30th September to 14th November 1987, including one possible *P. i. humei*. DENMARK Large influx: at least 17, including 13 at Christiansø, during 3rd October to 10th November 1987; includes country's first *P. i. humei*. MALTA Twentieth record: October 1987 (previous four were in autumn 1986, *Brit. Birds* 80: 328). SWEDEN Average autumn numbers: 21 during September to November 1987 (cf. total of 57 in 1985, *Brit. Birds* 80: 328).

**Radde's Warbler** *Phylloscopus schwarzi* DENMARK Sixth record: Christiansø on 30th September 1987. FRANCE Second record: Ouessant on 28th October 1987. SWEDEN Twelfth record: Ottenby during 18th-20th October 1987.

**Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* DENMARK Large influx: at least eight at Christiansø during 2nd-27th October 1987, and singles at Harboøre on 20th October 1987 and Ishøj Strand on 23rd October to 3rd November 1987, the second to eleventh records. ESTONIAN SSR Second record: Sôrve on 22nd November 1987\* (the first was in 1986, *Brit. Birds* 80: 328). FINLAND Influx: seven records in autumn 1987\* bring total to 19. FRANCE Influx: five or six on Ouessant from 22nd October to 7th November 1987\* represent third to seventh/eighth records. POLAND Fifth record: Kuźnica on Hel Peninsula on 13th September 1986. SWEDEN Influx: at least eight in East during 19th-27th October 1987; only 12 previously accepted.

**Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* DENMARK Influx of eastern race *P. c. tristis*: at least 13 individuals, including eight at Christiansø from 16th October to 3rd November 1987. ESTONIAN SSR Eighth record of *P. c. tristis*: Sôrve on 3rd October 1987\* (seventh was in 1986, *Brit. Birds* 80: 328).

**Wallcreeper** *Tichodroma muraria* BELGIUM Returning wintering individual: near Liege on 27th December 1987, in stone-pit where previously recorded in spring 1986 and winter 1986/87 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 14).

**Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus* FINLAND Tenth record: male holding territory in Mietoinen in June 1986. SPAIN Continued range expansion: spreading southwest, with many nests found along 170 km of Guadalquivir river valley during 1985-87.

**Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* FRANCE Third record: female on Ouessant during 14th-16th October 1987\*.

**Siberian Jay** *Perisoreus infaustus* UKRAINE SSR First record: Eytomer region in January 1977.

**Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* SWITZERLAND Sixth record: Brig on 26th May 1987.

**Rock Sparrow** *Petronia petronia* YUGOSLAVIA First record for Slovenia: singing male at Ankaran on 3rd May 1987.

**Redpoll** *Carduelis flammea* ESTONIAN SSR First breeding records: two nests with chick, and an additional nest built, at Tartu in 1987.

**Arctic Redpoll** *Carduelis hornemanni* UKRAINE SSR First and second records in West region: Lviv in December 1976 and December 1979.

**Scarlet Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus* NETHERLANDS Spring influx: dozens, including first three breeding pairs, mainly near coastal regions in spring 1987. UKRAINE SSR First breeding in West region: Lviv in June-July 1986.

**Pallas's Rosefinch** *Carpodacus roseus* DENMARK First record: trapped at Blåvand on 13th October 1987. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* MOROCCO Fifth record: male and three females near Meknes on 11th December 1987 (cf. southerly wintering in Portugal, *Brit. Birds* 81: 22).

**Northern Parula** *Parula americana* FRANCE First record: female/immature on Ouessant during 14th-16th September 1987. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Lapland Bunting** *Calcarius lapponicus* DENMARK High autumn numbers in West Jutland: 110 at Søndervig on 17th November 1987, and 114 at Vejlerne on 18th November 1987. SWITZERLAND Seventh record: trapped at La Corbière on 5th October 1986.

**Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalos* UKRAINE SSR Second record in West region: Lviv on 23rd May 1986; first record was in 1980 in Black Sea region.

**Girl Bunting** *Emberiza cirlus* POLAND Seventh record: two at Hańczowa in Beskid Niski Mountains on 18th August 1987. UKRAINE SSR First record in West region: Lviv on 11th August 1984.

**Rock Bunting** *Emberiza cia* POLAND Fifth record: male at Miradz near Bydgoszcz on 15 July 1987.

**Yellow-browed Bunting** *Emberiza chrysophrys* UKRAINE SSR First record in West region: Nesterov, Lviv, on 1st January 1983.

**Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* MALTA Nineteenth record: ringed in November 1986. POLAND Seventh record: singing male at Wizna on 29th April 1987. UKRAINE SSR First record in West region: Volyń on 19th July 1984.

**Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola* FRANCE Second record: male near Dijon, Côte d'Or, on 1st December 1987\*.

**Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus* GIBRALTAR First record: female on 7th November 1987. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Pallas's Reed Bunting** *Emberiza pallasi* USSR Range extension: breeding west to source of River Seyda in Bol'shezemel'skay tundra since 1981 is first in Europe (*Ornitologiya* 22: 134-147; drawn to our attention by M. G. Wilson). (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

**Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* FRANCE First record: female/immature on Ouessant on 15th October 1987.

### Correspondents

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UKRAINE SSR I. Gorbań, West Ukrainian Avifaunistic Commission, 264661 Shačk, National Park, Volyń Region

YUGOSLAVIA Iztok Geister, 64202 Naklo, Pokopaliska pot 13

No information was received from Albania, Bulgaria, the Faroe Islands, the Federal Republic of Germany, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, or Iceland.

## Announcements

**The 'BB' trip to Thailand 1988** The 1988 trip was later than usual, from 6th to 21st March. Migrant thrushes were generally scarce, but the trip total (377 species) was the highest ever. Highlights included excellent views of Black Bazas *Aviceda leuphotes* displaying, Painted Snipes *Rostratula benghalensis*, 3,000 Lesser Sand Plovers *Charadrius mongolus*, Greater Sand Plovers *C. leschenaultii*, Terek Sandpipers *Xenus cinereus*, Asiatic Dowitchers *Limnodromus semipalmatus*, Pintail Snipes *Gallinago stenura*, 250 Red-necked Stints *Calidris ruficollis*, Long-toed Stints *C. subminuta*, 200 Oriental Pratincoles *Glareola maldivarum*, Oriental Cuckoos *Cuculus saturatus*, 15 White-vented Needle-tails *Hirundapus cochinchinensis*, 250 Brown Needle-tails *H. giganteus*, Pacific Swifts *Apus pacificus*, Blue Pitta *Pitta cyanea*, Siberian Rubythroats *Luscinia calliope*, Siberian Blue Robins *L. cyane*, Red-flanked Bluetails *Tarsiger cyanurus*, White-tailed Robins *Cinclidium leucurum*, three species of fork-tail *Enicurus*, White's Thrushes *Zoothera dauma*, Eye-browed Thrushes *Turdus obscurus*, 34 species of warbler including Dusky *Phylloscopus fuscatus*, Radde's *P. schwarzi*, Thick-billed *Acrocephalus aedon*, Pallas's Grasshopper *Locustella certhiola*, and Lanceolated *L. lanceolata*, 18 species of flycatcher (Muscicapidae), Citrine Wagtails *Motacilla citreola*, Olive-backed Pipits *Anthus hodgsoni*, and Brown Shrikes *Lanius cristatus*.

Travel to and from Thailand was by Thai Airways International and the ground arrangements were made by Educational Travel Center, Bangkok; we thank both organisations for their efficient and friendly help.

182. 'British Birds' trip to Thailand 1988: left to right, Peter Edwards, Terry Atkinson, Dick Newell, Stephen Rumsey, Dennis Coutts, Tim Sharrock and Phil Round; Wat Tarn En, Thailand, March 1988 (Dennis Coutts)



**The 'BB' trip to Thailand in 1989** With the great success of our special small-group trips and continuing demand for them, another is planned for January/February 1989. Numbers will be limited to not more than six, and all will be 'BB' subscribers. Anyone interested should write now for details, to BB Thailand Trip 1989, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

**Congress on 'Expansion and Regression of Species'** To mark its 25th anniversary, the Aves Ornithological Study Group is organising an international congress to be held at the University of Liège, in Sart Tilman, during 19th-20th November 1988. Those wishing to submit a verbal communication or exposition poster, or who are interested and wish to take part in this Congress, are invited to contact the organisers as soon as possible: Aves—Colloque 1988, Maison de l'Environnement, 36 rue de la Régence, B-4000 Liège, Belgium.

**Post early to avoid disappointment** We do, of course, especially note the dates of postmarks of entries to our 'Monthly marathon' which arrive after the closing date of the 15th of the month. There have been a number of cases of postcards posted with second class stamps as early as 10th which did not arrive until 20th; and others with first class stamps which have taken up to one week. We strongly recommend the earliest possible posting of entries to competitions and correspondence which needs to be dealt with before a deadline.

**New books in British BirdShop** The following books have been added to the British BirdShop list this month:

- British Birds/IBCE *International Bird Identification*
- Busby *Drawing Birds*
- Falla, Sibson & Turbott *New Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*
- Farrand *The Audubon Master Guide to Birding*
- Fisher & Gantlett *A List of the Birds of the Isles of Scilly*
- Gillham *Tufted Ducks in a Royal Park*
- Nau, Boon & Knowles *Bedfordshire Wildlife*
- Pratt, Bruner & Berrett *A Field Guide to the Birds of Hawaii and the Tropical Pacific*
- Reader's Digest *Complete Book of Australian Birds*
- Reader's Digest *Complete Book of New Zealand Birds*

These can be obtained POST FREE through British BirdShop. Please use the order forms on pages xiii and xiv.

## Request

**Photographs of Israeli birds** For a forthcoming joint publication between the Israeli Trust for Ornithology and *British Birds*—*The Birds of Israel: their status and distribution* by Hadoram Shirihi—bird photographs are required. These must have been taken in Israel. Please state species, photographer's name, location and date. Selection will be made by the Photographic Committee: David M. Cottridge and Paul Doherty in England, and Yosi Eshbol and Hadoram Shirihi in Israel. This publication will be a non-profit-making venture, so submitting photographers are asked kindly to waive their reproduction fee. Each photographer whose work is used will receive one free copy of the book. Please send photographs (colour transparencies or black-and-white prints) to David M. Cottridge, 6 Sutherland Road, Tottenham, London N17 0BN.

## Reviews

**Tufted Ducks in a Royal Park.** By Eric Gillham. Eric Gillham, Lydd-on-Sea, 1986. 308 pages; 18 colour plates; 105 black-and-white plates; 1 line-drawing. £18.00.

In the late 1950s, two papers by Eric Gillham appeared in *British Birds* on the Tufted Ducks *Aythya fuligula* in St James' Park, London. They detailed five years of meticulous observations, particularly of breeding behaviour. In the mid 1960s, Eric was co-author of the definitive paper on *Aythya* hybrids, published in *Wildfowl*. But then—silence. Rumour

had it that the interest in Tufted Ducks still continued, but writing and publishing had apparently ceased.

Now, though, all is revealed. Not only has Eric continued to record the intimate lives of the Tufted Duck in St James' Park, so that his data now span 32 years, but he has also assembled all his information and published it in this book. And when I say 'he has . . . published', I mean just that. This book joins that select list of ornithological works which have been 'published by the author'. I hope his reason for so doing was not that he could not find a recognised publisher to take the work. The book, in my view, thoroughly merits publication and most certainly deserves to be read.

St James' Park was once marshy ground on London's outskirts, then a park for the sole use of the Royal Family, and is now a popular open space, with its collection of captive wildfowl, among which the wild Tufted Ducks live so successfully. Tufted Duck plumages, locomotion and feeding methods, and the many different hybrid types which can occur, are briefly described, as is the species' status in the environs of London. The author's methods of study included recognition of individuals showing minute plumage variations, plus some colour ringing. The latter showed that some birds came from abroad while others remained within London.

The meat of the book is contained in five chapters covering the Tufted Duck year: courtship and pairing; nesting and brood-rearing; and the post-breeding season. Although the text is well sprinkled with anecdotes, all the many facts are thoroughly backed up by 43 tables and 13 appendices. There can be few aspects of the lives of London's Tufted Ducks which escaped observation and careful recording. The tables can sometimes lack information on the year(s) to which the data apply, but, time and again, when reading the text and wanting to verify a statement, there were the data set out in a table for inspection. There is, finally, a chapter giving more detail about food and particularly feeding methods than I have seen in any previous work on the species.

Both the colour and the black-and-white photographs are well chosen and informative. The whole book is attractively produced on good quality paper and is a credit to the author/publisher. A note on the dust-jacket states that all profits from sales of the book will be spent on providing artificial nest sites for Tufted Ducks in London. That is just a small, added, reason for purchasing this fascinating book.

M. A. OGILVIE

**Bedfordshire Wildlife. Edited by B. S. Nau, C. R. Boon and J. P. Knowles.** Castlemead Publications, Ware, 1987. 180 pages; 15 colour plates; 70 black-and-white plates; 21 line-drawings. £15.00.

There is a growing and pleasing recent trend in the appearance of general natural history books covering a single county. A series in progress, published in conjunction with the relevant county naturalists' trusts, has already covered Cornwall, Derbyshire, Essex, and others. The force behind the publication under review is the Bedfordshire Natural History Society, which celebrated its fortieth anniversary in 1986; the publishers were responsible for the recent, well-received *Birds of Hertfordshire*.

Initial impressions are pleasing: the dustjacket has a colourful painting by Alan Harris showing the chalk escarpment of South Bedfordshire with typical plants and butterflies, and inside is a liberal helping of both colour and black-and-white photographs. The fact that the photographic editor is Richard Revels ensures their quality and interest. Look at the amazing photograph on page 47.

Nine chapters are grouped into four sections: 'Historical Background', 'Wildlife Today', 'Major Regions' (the chalk downs and greensand ridge), and 'Special Habitats'. Each chapter is written by a local expert, and well edited so that the general approach is uniform. These are followed by an Appendix of some 20 pages of species checklists of major groups of animals and plants. Their usefulness, however, is slightly marred, I feel, by the fact that the records included are only for the period 1946-86. Birds are divided into five categories—residents, summer visitors, winter visitors, passage migrants and vagrants (why not an extra one for pre-1946 records?)—though they are listed in Voous sequence within each category. I found this layout rather trying at first, but the same approach is used for other groups of animals, including moths, where my interest far outstrips my knowledge: here I could appreciate the value of knowing at a glance which moths were common, frequent, or rare.

National experts on several less-popular groups of animals have lived within the county, and such expertise is reflected in their wide treatment. Amongst the better known groups, Bedfordshire is known to the mammalogist as the source of muntjac *Muntiacus reevesi* and water deer *Hydropotes inermis* in Britain; to the botanist as holding the first, and until recently the only, British site for grey mouse-ear *Cerastium brachypetalum* (discovered on the very first field trip of the newly formed Bedfordshire NHS!); to the bibliophile as the first county to have a published 'Flora', in 1798; and of course to the birder for the spectacular Lady Amherst's Pheasant *Chrysolophus amherstiae*.

Rereading the first few chapters, I could not help but feel sad that so much has changed, so much has been lost. In no group is this more evident than the butterflies: nine species extinct in the county, and a further 13 in decline. The chequered skipper *Carterocephalus palaemon*, now extinct in England, was first discovered as a British insect in Bedfordshire. Even over the past 40 years, the landscape, and with it its wildlife and flora, has changed considerably. The huge increase in standing waters in the form of brick-pits and gravel-pits, documented in the chapter 'New Waters', now form the county's major avian honeypots. Paradoxically, the bird life of the county has probably never been richer in variety.

Bedfordshire is only a small county, but its variety of habitats, now so fragmented by agricultural and industrial change and the pressures of housing, can be seen as a microcosm of southern England. Whether interested in wildlife generally, or more specifically in Bedfordshire, you will find much of interest in this most attractive publication. The higher plants of the county have already been covered in two recent floras (one a tetrad map flora), and the breeding birds in the *Bedfordshire Bird Atlas* (1979). Can we have the long overdue, complete avifauna next, please?

IAN DAWSON

**Avifauna Bavariae: die Vogelwelt Bayerns im Wandel der Zeit. Band II. Pteroclitiformes (Flughühner) bis Passeriformes (Sperlingsvögel).** By Walter Wüst. Ornithologische Gesellschaft in Bayern, Munich. 1986. 717 pages; 29 colour photographs; ten black-and-white photographs; 48 figures and maps; 58 tables. DM 69.00.

Let me say at the outset that this is without doubt a work of scholarship and erudition, the results of extensive research, and a monumental credit to Dr Wüst, his fellow contributors and the publishers. The title tells us that this is a work on the birds of Bavaria, but the depth of treatment given reaches beyond that, into areas normally reserved for handbooks and not touched by the average local or county avifauna.

Volume I (which I have not seen) covered introductory matter and the first 207 species in 732 pages. This second volume, with 186 species, completes the systematic list (which includes *all* escapes: e.g. six species of parrot). The species are dealt with under such sub-headings as vernacular names, races, status, distribution, chronicle, density, population changes, habitat/biotope, food, breeding biology, phenology and/or migration, 'open questions', threats and conservation. These are not used for all species, and indeed other sub-headings are frequently preferred, the format reflecting—sensibly—what is most relevant or appropriate to each species. Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*, currently declining in several parts of Europe, has ten pages of small type on 'chronicle and population data' in its 18-page treatment; while Swallow *Hirundo rustica* receives over 30 pages of incredible detail, mostly on 'frequency and density', 'reproduction phenology' and 'migration phenology'; seven sonagrams showing the south German dialects of Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* further represent the depth of species treatment. There are few distribution maps, the text and the recent Bavarian breeding atlas by Nitsche covering this aspect, but the dozen or so that are included do show historical developments, sometimes from pre-1900, to the present. Somewhat annoyingly, the thousands of references are published in a separate bibliography. The whole volume II, including the 29 colour photos (one an intriguing shot of hybrid Syrian × Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus* × *major*, another a fine study of Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia* habitat), is excellently produced.

I cannot imagine any serious Bavarian birdwatcher not buying this work and its complementary publications. Many others, who can afford it and can read German, will also find it more than worthwhile.

DAVID A. CHRISTIE

# News and comment

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*Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch*

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

**End of research on birds at the BM** The British Museum has had a bird collection for over 200 years. For three-quarters of that time, the Museum has employed a distinguished staff of specialists to curate and study the collection, advise Government on matters relating to birds and answer enquiries from the public and from scientists throughout the world. It has also played an important role in all other aspects of national and international ornithological affairs.

Only 15 years ago, the Sub-department of Ornithology was moved from the world famous Bird-Room in the main Natural History Museum in South Kensington, London, to a magnificent new block attached to the late Lord Rothschild's natural history museum at Tring in Hertfordshire. In the early 1980s, it still had a staff of 11 to look after the largest bird collection in the world. Since then, the Sub-department has been progressively run down, as senior staff who became due for retirement were not replaced, until the total has fallen to only six.

It is now said that, due to financial stringency, the last two staff with scientific qualifications may shortly be declared redundant and that all research on birds is to cease. This will mean the end of professional research into bird classification in Britain, at a time when it is developing rapidly throughout the world. Since the only remaining senior member is shortly due to retire, this will leave only three junior staff members, lacking any qualifications to carry on the other functions of the Sub-department.

A previous President of the British Ornithologists' Union first expressed concern at this trend to the authorities two years ago. As news of these developments spread, similar representations have recently been made by the American Ornithologists' Union and other learned organisations, with little response. The situation was considered by the British Ornithologists' Union at its Annual General Meeting in London on 23rd April and the following emergency resolution was passed unanimously:

*'For 150 years the British Museum (Natural*

*History)* has carried out research of international importance based on the largest ornithological collection in the world. The British Ornithologists' Union deplores the decision to cease all research activity on birds and calls for this policy to be reversed.'

We can only echo these sentiments, taken from a BOU Press Release. Authors of many papers which have appeared in *British Birds* have owed much to the ready, expert help provided by the staff at 'the BM'. It seems incredible that a renowned and respected institution which enhances Britain's reputation in the world should be run down for the sake of relatively small sums of money (in Budget terms). We hope that those responsible will 'think again'. If you wish to press for this decision to be reversed, you should write to (1) Rt Hon. Richard Luce MP, Minister for the Arts, Office of Arts and Libraries, Horse Guards Road, London SW1 3AL; (2) Dr R. H. Hedley, Director, British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD; and (3) Prof. Sir Richard Harrison, Chairman of the Trustees, British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD. (*JTRS*)

**Well done, Michel** Belatedly, our congratulations go to Michel Terrasse, who was awarded the Order of Merit by the French government last November. This was in recognition of the sterling work he and his brother, Jean-François, have done for conservation in France during the last 30 years. One of their most lasting achievements has been the creation of the Fonds d'Intervention pour les Rapaces—with some 4,000 members, now one of France's largest ornithological organisations. Michel also played a leading role in reintroducing the Griffon Vulture *Cyps fulvus* to the Cévennes: the fact that 18 pairs bred in the wild in 1987 is a measure of the success of this imaginative scheme.

**The Dam over the River Kwai** Thailand's conservationists were as delighted as the country's many friends and birding visitors here when it was announced in March that plans to construct a huge dam in the valley



of the River Kwai had been halted. The dam would not only have threatened a huge tract of rain-forest (Thailand now has only 29% forest cover, compared with 75% in the 1930s), but would also have caused irreparable damage to the Yai Naresaun reserve, with its 350 bird species and many rare mammals, including tigers *Panthera tigris*; important 7,000-year-old archaeological sites would have gone too. The scheme would also have jeopardised a joint Thai Royal Forest Service/Wildfowl Trust project to reintroduce the White-winged Wood Duck *Cairina scutulata* to the area: this species, threatened with extinction, has recently been rediscovered in the region.

**The Wash** At long last, the Wash has been given the formal protection it deserves: on 30th March 1988 it became the 25th Special Protection Area designated under European Community Directive 79/409—which requires the government to protect British examples of the most important bird sites—and also our 34th ‘Ramsar site’. The Ramsar Convention of 1971, to which the British government is a signatory, requires it to promote the conservation of internationally important wetland sites. Nobody should need reminding of the outstanding importance of the Wash for birds: it supports our largest wintering wildfowl and wader populations (over 57,000 and over 163,000 respectively), has internationally important wintering populations of 14 species, at least five which are nationally important, and supports nationally important breeding populations of at least seven species. The designations come as a welcome and significant step forward, but let us not forget that there are still nearly 200 other sites awaiting the same degree of recognition.

**Flow Country gets US coverage** The influential New York Zoological Society, North America’s oldest wildlife conservation organisation, gave spectacular coverage to the damage done to ‘Britain’s Serengeti’ (the Flow Country of Caithness and Sutherland) by tax-avoidance forestry in its May/June 1988 issue of *Animal Kingdom*, which has a circulation of over 150,000. A total of 32 pages of this issue of *Animal Kingdom* was devoted to the subject, with a good scattering of relevant high-quality colour photographs. Any *British Birds* reader who would like to see a copy should write (sending

\$5.00 in US currency) to Animal Kingdom, New York Zoological Park, Bronx, New York 10460, USA.

**More on the Flows** We have already had our say over the disastrous situation in the Flow Country (see e.g. 81: 83, 194), but we make no excuses for saying some more. By March this year, there was still no light being shed on the Government’s contradictory statements on how much was still going to be planted, how the proposed 71,000 ha of SSSIs would be organised or what was likely to happen to the 135,000 ha which appeared to have been left out of all the calculations. Then came the Budget, and, at a stroke, the removal of all those tax reliefs which had made large-scale planting such an attractive proposition in the first place. Two days later, it was announced that forestry was to become more sensitive to the environment and that, in the English uplands at least, approval should not normally be given for large-scale coniferous afforestation. There would be a move towards lower ground and more broadleaves, with higher grants as incentives. All this seemed good news, but then the new grants were made public: a welcome increase (by up to 60%) in grants for broadleaf plantings, but (and here came the real kick in the teeth) also an increase of up to 150% for conifers, and no restrictions on planting in areas like the Flows. You do not have to be a cynic to see that one system of unacceptable public funding seems to have been replaced by another. So, it seems, we are really back where we started.

**Welsh Ornithological Society** At a conference in Aberystwyth on 26th March, attended by over 150 birders, the Welsh Ornithological Society came into being. Peter Hope Jones is its first Chairman, and Peter Walters Davies the first Secretary. We wish them well and hope to hear more from them from time to time. Meanwhile, if you would like to join, or to find out more about the Society’s aims and activities, write to Peter Walters Davies at Alltgo, Caemelyn, Aberystwyth, Dyfed SY23 2HA, or telephone him on Aberystwyth (0970) 615418.

**Fair Isle Appeal** Nick Riddiford, in sending us the 1987 *Fair Isle Bird Observatory Report* (£3.15, including postage, from FIBOT, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT), has

drawn our attention to a big appeal to raise money to ensure the future of the Observatory and to enable the Trust to carry out essential repair work and improvements. This year is Fair Isle Bird Observatory's 40th Anniversary. Birders everywhere recognise the very special place Fair Isle has in our ornithological history, and we feel that they should put their hands in their pockets and give as generously as they can. So how about it, *BB* readers? Some of you could send £1 for every lifer and/or British tick that you have had there, for a start.

**The New Atlas** Tuesday 22nd March saw the launch of the New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland. At a reception in London, Bill Oddie, Dr Jeremy Greenwood, Director of the BTO, and Dr Peter Chester, Director of Environment from the Central Electricity Generating Board, ably presented reasons why all birdwatchers should participate in this the most ambitious and exciting survey of breeding birds yet undertaken in the region. The original Breeding Atlas (Sharrock 1976) has become the standard text on the distribution of breeding birds in Britain and Ireland, being quoted by conservation body and developer alike; but 20 years have elapsed since the fieldwork for that atlas started. In that period, there has been a massive upsurge in interest in the environment, and also an increase in human pressures on breeding habitats.

The new atlas, scheduled for publication in 1992, aims not only to give us a more up-to-date picture of the distribution of breeding birds, but also to provide much-needed quantitative data on the numbers of birds involved. This is important from several viewpoints: conservation organisations and planners alike will be better able to assess potential developments in terms of their likely effects on breeding birds, and the atlas results will be of interest to scientists trying to understand the causes of distribution and abundance; amateur birdwatchers, too, will be able to gain a real insight into the ecology of our birdlife.

The BTO is running the new atlas in association with the Scottish Ornithologists' Club and the Irish Wildbird Conservancy; and the CEGB is sponsoring the survey through WWF-UK.

It is anticipated that at least 10,000 birdwatchers will take part in the fieldwork during the 1988-90 breeding seasons, and all competent birdwatchers are encouraged to

join in. Whether you are a member of the Trust or not, your birdwatching could be valuable.

As Bill Oddie stressed, atlassing need not be hard work and is also great fun, encouraging birdwatchers to visit sites they may otherwise ignore; and many interesting local records have resulted from survey work. Anyone wishing to take part (particularly those people who live in less-populated areas) should contact the national atlas organiser, Dr David Gibbons, BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR. (MB)

**BTO Raptor Research Register** For a decade now, the British Trust for Ornithology has been operating its Raptor Research Register. It works in a simple, but effective fashion. Any observer actively engaged in research involving any of the diurnal raptors or owls is asked kindly to complete a project card issued via the Trust. The projects vary widely in size and scope from, for example, the social and feeding behaviour of a pair of Tawny Owls *Strix aluco* to a nationwide survey of Peregrines *Falco peregrinus*. Contributors indicate the nature of their research by using a tick-box system; the subjects covered range widely from population density, spacing, breeding performance, behaviour, roosting and prey to migration, moult, biometrics, captive breeding and veterinary studies.

The cards, now totalling 390 (covering 21 species), have proved extremely valuable in two ways: first and foremost, the Register has provided an important point of contact for students of raptors. Photocopies are sent upon request to anyone expressing an interest in a particular species or line of research, thus promoting early contact and the active exchange of ideas and results. Second, the cards enable the BTO to assess current levels of research into birds of prey and indicate scope for future avenues of Trust survey work. Foreign studies are not actively encouraged, though the Register does include cards from as far afield as Colombia, Finland, Kenya and Malaysia. If you are able to complete a card for a new project, or update an existing one, please write to the Register's secretary: David Glue, Raptor Research Register, British Trust for Ornithology, Beech Grove, Tring, Herts, HP23 5NR. (Contributed by David Glue)

**Sunbirders in Eilat** Over 100 participants took part in the first 'Sunbirder' event at

Eilat, Israel, during 9th-23rd March. Organised by our 'Monthly marathon' sponsors, Sunbirder, the package offers flights, hotel, information sheets, site maps and an evening get-together for a log call, as well as optional extras such as car hire and with-leader daily minibus excursions. The combined total seen by Sunbirder participants on this trip was 202 species, with most of the keener ones seeing over 170. Perhaps the major find in a trip full of highlights was Peter Beaumont's discovery of a new site for Hume's Tawny Owl *Strix butleri*, just outside Eilat. Sunbirder is a new idea in birding holidays which, judging by the unanimous acclaim of participants in the first event, is here to stay. Details are obtainable from Sunbirder, Box 76C, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DE, tel. Sandy (0767) 82969. (Contributed by Peter Grant)

**East Anglian winner** The recent successful BTO one-day conference at the University

of East Anglia, Norwich, left Dr Kevin Elshy the richer by one bottle of champagne: he defeated 16 other entrants in the *BB* mystery photographs competition, which was run by Mick Wright. (Contributed by Tim Davis)

### English vagrant makes the news in Asia

We enjoyed the report in the 28th March 1988 issue of the *Bangkok Post*: 'An Alpine Swift that got his bearings wrong and wound up 1,600 kilometres off-course in the charming English hamlet of Birmingham has been flown to Portugal, where he should have been. A spokesman for British Airways, which flew it to Portugal, said: "It has to be released carefully back into the wild. It will be placed on the ground by a brick wall so it can climb up and get its bearings".' This recalls the report some time ago, in a BBC news broadcast, of occurrences in 'the tiny Irish village of Baile Átha Cliath' (= Dublin!).

## March reports



*Keith Allsopp and Ian Dawson*

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records.  
Unless otherwise stated, dates refer to March 1988

*With the Azores anticyclone established to the west, cool north to northwesterly wind persisted until 13th, bringing unsettled wet conditions. As the pressure declined, warmer westerlies followed, interrupted on 17th and 18th by the development of a high-pressure ridge over Britain and Ireland. As this moved westward, strong westerlies ensued, turning more northerly by 26th as high pressure returned over mid Atlantic.*

## A glimpse of the past

Two centuries ago, **Red Kites** *Milvus milvus* would have been a common sight in England; now they are all too rare. This month, however, they were reported in southeast England in greater numbers than for many years. In the preceding month, records away from the Welsh breeding range had been more frequent than usual, with six in January and three in February, but in March, between 17th and 30th, over 40 sightings were noted. Four flying together near Holme (Norfolk) on 18th began the parade, followed by 11 singles seen on 19th, north to Lincolnshire and west to Leicestershire; and from then on one to five were reported daily, the farthest north being on Fair Isle on 26th; with many then remaining in England. They were probably of East European origin, returning after wintering in Southwest Europe, and being deflected north across the Channel by a strong southeasterly airstream associated with a slow-moving front aligned northwest-southeast across England and France on 18th.

### Divers to herons

Notable concentrations of **Red-throated Divers** *Gavia stellata* before their flights north were seen, with 19 at Walney (Cumbria) on 5th, 12 at Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire) on 20th, and 72 in Aberlady and Gullane Bays (Lothian) on 21st. A few single **Black-throated** *G. arctica* and **Great Northern**

**Divers** *G. immer* were still reported, but a total of three **White-billed Divers** *G. adamsii* was unusual: one was found at Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire) on 11th, moving to Bridlington (Humberside) on 14th, another stayed in Gullane Bay from 19th, and the Whalsay (Shetland) individual could still be found. An exceptional number of **Red-necked Grebes** *Podiceps grisegena* had col-

183. Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, off Co. Cork, March 1988 (Richard T. Mills)



lected in Aberlady and Gullane Bays by 21st, when 68 were counted; and also notable were movements of **Gannets** *Sula bassana* off Southwold (Suffolk) on 6th, when 324 flew north in four hours, and 113 **Shags** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* passing south at Spurn Point (Humberside) during 5th to 6th. A small influx of **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* occurred: one was on the Camel Estuary (Cornwall) on 10th, another at Wigan (Lancashire) on 28th and also nearby at Rochdale (Lancashire) on 31st, and one on the Isle of Wight on 29th and 30th, followed by a sighting at Mattingley (Hampshire) on 31st.

### Wildfowl

The wintering English goose flocks departed early in the month, 11 **Bean Geese** *Anser fabalis* calling at Holkham (Norfolk) on their way on 1st. Duck flocks also departed, taking their adopted rarities with them: the **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* at Wimbleball Lake (Somerset) stayed until 20th, and another spent four days at Burton Marsh (Cheshire) from 17th. **Garganeys** *A. querquedula* on passage were scarce, but **Red-**



**crested Pochards** *Netta rufina* were more obvious, eight being reported in England and Wales. Six **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* also stayed longer, associated with the local flocks of Tufted Ducks *A. fuligula*. Two regular **King Eiders** *Somateria spectabilis* remained on Loch Fleet (Highland) and off Tayport (Fife), and five **Surf Scoters** *Melanitta perspicillata* collected in Largo Bay (Fife) on 16th.

### Raptors to waders

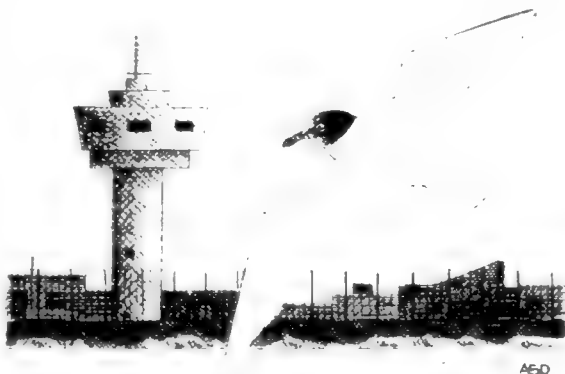
**Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* were seen on four occasions in East Anglia in early March, and one passed over Gibraltar Point on 20th. An early **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* was seen at Blithfield Reservoir

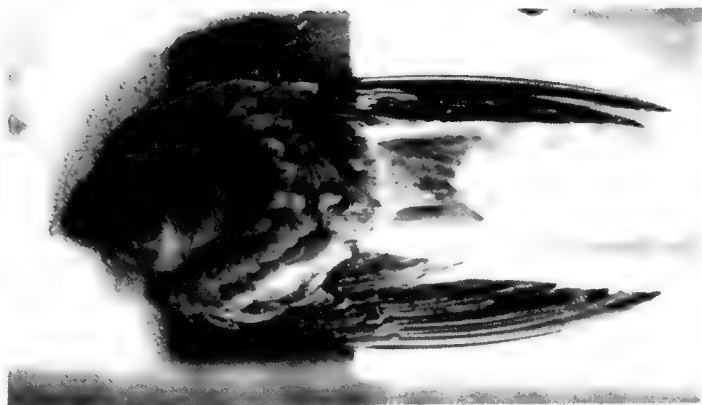


(Staffordshire) on 25th, and another was on the Marathon Gas-platform (off Co. Cork) from 28th into April (plate 183). The winter rains left most waters overflowing, with few areas being suitable for passage waders. Unusual records were of a **Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oedipnemus* at St Catherine's Point (Isle of Wight) and a **Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* at Falmouth (Cornwall), both on 27th. The high-tide wader roost at Gibraltar Point included an impressive 2,500 **Grey Plovers** *Pluvialis squatarola* on 18th, and 35 **Jack Snipes** *Lymnocyrtus minimus* were a notable concentration at Sandwell Valley (West Midlands) for this increasingly scarce winter visitor. The **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularia* at Plymouth (Devon) and Seaview (Isle of Wight) stayed put.

### Skuas to auks

Gull roosts have become increasingly interesting over the years, as identification standards have improved along with the increasing use of telescopes. Now, many more **Mediterranean Gulls** *Larus melanocephalus* are being found, this month's total, excluding the 19 concentrated at Folkestone (Kent), exceeded 30. In contrast, only seven **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis* were found;





184 & 185. Alpine Swift *Apus melba*, off Co. Cork, March 1988 (Richard T. Mills)

but numbers of **Iceland** *L. glaucoides* and **Glaucous Gulls** *L. hyperboreus* were much increased from previous months, the former totalling some 40 reports which included 11 at Ullapool (Highland), and the latter reaching 44, of which 14 were also at Ullapool. The most-coveted sight is still a glimpse of a **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea*, and many birders visited first Mullion (Cornwall) and then Plymouth between 8th and 29th to achieve that ambition; another Ross's paid a short visit to Sunderland (Tyne & Wear) on 16th. An active weather front orientated northwest-southeast across the English Midlands remained stationary on 12th and 13th, effectively halting an overland passage of **Kittiwakes** *Rissa tridactyla*: 150 were resting at Pitsford Reservoir (Northamptonshire), 98 at Howden Reservoir (Derbyshire), 70 on Lancashire waters and 70 at Swithland Reservoir (Leicestershire). Notable auk records were of single **Black Guillemots** *Uria aalge* away from their breeding areas, at Walney from 1st to 6th, and at Filey Brigg and Portland Harbour (Dorset) on 2nd.



186. Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*, Merseyside, March 1988 (Steve Young)

#### Swifts to passerines

With predominantly adverse cool winds,

spring migrants were scarce; weather windows did occur, however, on 15th, when warm air pushed in from the south, and on 18th and 19th when a prefrontal jet from the southeast crossed England. On 16th, an **Alpine Swift** *Apus melba* was found grounded in Dudley (West Midlands), and, after recuperating at the Sandwell Valley RSPB Reserve, was flown to Portugal on 20th. From 17th to 30th, a further 13 sightings of this exciting species were reported, including one on the Marathon Gas-platform on 29th (plates 184 & 185), and with two together at both Broadstairs (Kent) from 24th to 28th and Swanage (Dorset) on 30th. The first **Woodlark** *Lullula arborea* to be seen in Orkney for 75 years was noted on 27th, and another was at Sandwich Bay (Kent) on 29th. An early **Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* was seen at Radipole Lake (Dorset) on 8th, the species becoming commoner after 16th. **Swallows** *Hirundo rustica* began to arrive from 20th, and a **Red-rumped Swallow** *H. daurica* reached Alderney (Channel Islands) on 30th. Three migrant **Water Pipits** *Anthus spinoletta* were seen at Grafham Water (Cambridgeshire) on 18th, three more at Strumpshaw Fen (Norfolk) on 19th, and one at Cley (Norfolk) also on 19th. A **Dipper** *Cinclus cinclus* of the nominate, black-bellied race was a weekend find at Chilham (Kent) on 19th and 20th. Early migrant **Nightingales** *Luscinia megarhynchos* arrived at Littlehampton (West Sussex) on 21st, and at Freshwater (Isle of Wight) on 27th. **Wheatears** *Oenanthe oenanthe* arrived in numbers only after 17th, reaching Fair Isle on 27th, where a **Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus* had made the earliest-ever arrival for the species by two days on 16th. A **Cetti's Warbler** *Cettia cetti* inspected Titchwell (Norfolk) on 20th; **Chiffchaffs** *Phylloscopus collybita* were found from 16th, but were not commonly reported;





187 & 188. Alpine Swift *Apus melba*, Kent, March 1988 (J. Bessant)

and at Blows Down (Bedfordshire) a **Willow Warbler** *P. trochilus* made its earliest appearance for 27 years on 22nd. A small influx of **Firecrests** *Regulus ignicapillus* occurred at the end of the month, with four at Sandwich Bay on 29th and six singles in south and east England. A **Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caedatus* showing the white-headed character of the nominate, northern European race was seen briefly at Walberswick (Suffolk) on 20th. Eight **Great Grey Shrikes** *Lanius excubitor* remained on their winter territories throughout the month, presumably timing their departure to ensure that the main passerine migrants reached their summer quarters to provide sufficient prey on arrival. Three **Hawfinches** *Coccothraustes coc-*

*cothraustes* were out of place on Orkney on 23rd, and also displaced was a **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla*, which stayed at Lashford Lane Reserve (Oxfordshire) from 19th to 21st.

#### Recent rarities decisions

The following three records have been accepted: Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* at Blacktoft (Humberside) in July 1986, Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* at Sumburgh (Shetland) in September and October 1985, and Chestnut-sided Warbler *Dendroica pensylvanica* on Fetlar (Shetland) in September 1985. All involve species new to Britain and Ireland which have now attained Category A status. (Contributed by P. G. Lansdown)

## Monthly marathon

April's puzzle photograph (plate 92) was identified by competitors as:

Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	(70%)
Red-breasted Flycatcher <i>Ficedula parva</i>	(9%)
Red-flanked Bluetail <i>Tarsiger cyanurus</i>	(7%)
Redstart <i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	(6%)
Siberian Blue Robin <i>Luscinia cyane</i>	(5%)
Nightingale <i>L. megarhynchos</i>	(2%)

with a few votes for Bluethroat *L. svecica*, Black Redstart *P. ochruros*, Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* and Pied Flycatcher *F. hypoleuca*.

It did look very like a Robin, and we suspect that those who named it as something else were finding it impossible to believe that we would set such an easy problem. It was, however, not a catch; last month's marathon bird was a Robin, photographed by Anthony Pioli in Derbyshire in November 1986.

Anthony McGeehan was not fooled. His correct answer takes him on to a seven-in-a-row sequence, equalling the magnificent run by Grahame Walbridge earlier in this second 'Monthly marathon' competition. He needs just another three to give him the ten successive correct answers which will win him the SUNBIRD holiday of his choice in Africa, Asia or North America. There are, however, 29 competitors with three right so far.

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26 with two right, and even more with just one, all chasing him and hoping that he will stumble over one of the next three photographs. This month's puzzle is shown in plate 189.



189. Second 'Monthly marathon' competition. Photograph number 15. Identify the species. Read the rules on page 49 in the January 1988 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th August 1988

## Recent reports

This summary covers the period 16th May-19th June 1988

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* Willen Lake (Buckinghamshire), two from 8th-16th June.

**Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* Near Clevedon (Avon), 12th-15th June.

**Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus* St Mary's (Scilly), 21st May.

**Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* Holkham (Norfolk), 18th June.

**Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* Leighton Moss (Lancashire), 24th-25th May; Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), 11th June; Swords Estuary (Co. Dublin), 12th-13th June.

**Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* Christchurch Harbour (Dorset), 15th-18th June; Dunge-

ness (Kent), 17th-18th June; Hickling (Norfolk), two on 18th June.

**Needle-tailed Swift** *hirundapus caudacutus* Hoy (Orkney), to 7th June.

**Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* Male of the race *feldegg* Brightwell cum Sotwell (Oxfordshire), from 13th June; later joined by male *flava*.

**Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* Fair Isle (Shetland), 28th May-1st June; Cley (Norfolk), from 7th June.

**Spanish Sparrow** *Passer hispaniolensis* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), female trapped on 30th May.

**Pallas's Rosefinch** *Carpodacus roseus* North Ronaldsay, from 2nd June.

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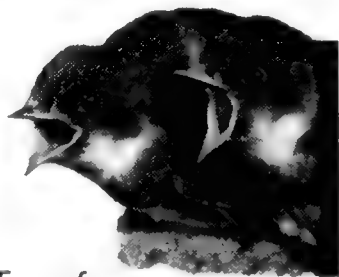
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# British Birds

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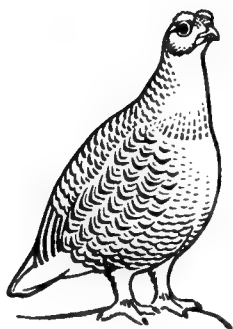
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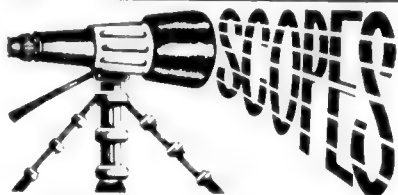
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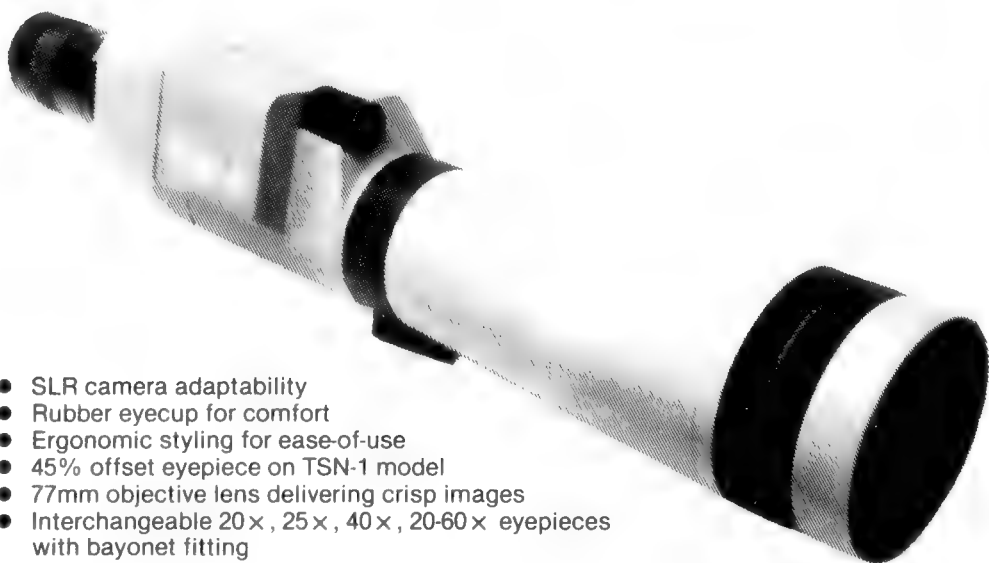
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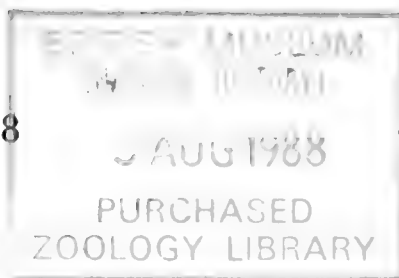
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# British Birds

VOLUME 81 NUMBER 8 AUGUST 1988



## Art consultants

**W**e are delighted to announce that Robert Gillmor and Alan Harris have accepted the Editorial Board's invitations to become joint Art Consultants to *British Birds*.

Robert Gillmor and Alan Harris are both very well-known names to *BB* readers. Robert's work first appeared in the journal in 1952 (*Brit. Birds* 45: 49, 117-121), when series of drawings by him illustrated papers by E. M. Nicholson (on shearwaters in the English Channel) and by Derek Goodwin (on behaviour of the Magpie *Pica pica*); his line-drawings have since become a regular feature, and in recent years it has been traditional for our December issue to feature a 'Gillmor' on the cover. Since its inception in 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 403-409), Robert Gillmor has been one of the judges for our 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' competition. Robert was a

190. Robert Gillmor (*Jeffrey Taylor*)







191. Alan Harris (Sally Harris)

founder member of the Society of Wildlife Artists, its Hon. Secretary for many years, and is now its President.

Alan Harris won the title 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' in 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 304-308) and in the following year was one of the judges for the competition. His line-drawings have graced the pages of *BB* many times, and in recent years his detailed and meticulously researched paintings have been an integral part of several highly praised identification papers (e.g. wheatears, *Brit. Birds* 80: 138-156; and large terns, *Brit. Birds* 80: 260-267). Alan has on several occasions attended the colour printing of *British Birds*, together with our editorial staff, to ensure accurate colour reproduction.

We feel sure that all the artists who regularly provide their work for use in *British Birds* will welcome these two honorary appointments.

## Seventy-five years ago...

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'COOTS AND MOORHENS LAYING IN THE SAME NEST. As I do not remember to have seen any record of a Coot (*Fulica a. atra*) and a Moorhen (*Gallinula ch. chloropus*) or two Coots laying in the same nest, the following observations may prove of interest: . . . These three instances, occurring on two pools within half a mile of each other, suggest that it is not infrequent for Coots and Moorhens to lay indiscriminately in nests of the former species. A. GEOFFREY LEIGH. [Although it is well known among field-ornithologists that Coots and Moorhens, like ducks and game-birds, will lay in each other's nests, standard works seem to omit mention of the fact.—EDS.]' (*Brit. Birds* 7:88, August 1913)

# Suggested changes to the English names of some Western Palearctic birds



*British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee*

**T**he body responsible for maintaining the British List has always been the Records Committee (previously known as List Sub-Committee) of the British Ornithologists' Union, which has published its recommendations in 1883, 1915, 1923, 1952 and 1971. A revision of the latest of these, *The Status of Birds in Britain and Ireland*, is currently in preparation, with publication expected within two or three years. With each new list, the whole range of information concerning British birds is reviewed: relationships and validity of species, which may result in changes in sequence of listing and in scientific names; status within Britain, which usually results in numerous additions to and a small number of deletions from the list; and the English names applied to those species which are accepted on the list.

At the time of preparation of the 1952 list, very few British birdwatchers travelled abroad. The change even since 1971 has been remarkable. Nowadays, most British birdwatchers have overseas birdwatching experience, and many habitually travel well beyond Europe. Now, more than ever before, there is a need for standardisation of English names, for most

birdwatchers (a term used here in contrast to 'ornithologists', who are taken to be primarily professional scientists) do not usually use scientific names in conversation or in the field.

The question of revision of English names has already been tackled by, for instance, the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union (1978) and the American Ornithologists' Union (1983). In 1985, therefore, the BOURC appointed a small subcommittee to make recommendations concerning the principles to be applied in any name changes, and, based upon these, to suggest those which were due for consideration.

In 1986, the subcommittee reported to the BOURC. The seven principles set out below were considered by the BOURC and adopted after each one was accepted by a majority of the committee.

Principles to be followed in adoption of any changes to English names:

1. Unrelated species should never have a common group name which would result in their being indexed together.
2. All species within a natural group (certainly genus and preferably subfamily or even family) should *preferably* have a distinctive group name under which they would be indexed together.
3. Each species on the West Palearctic list should have a unique name (i.e. one not shared with another species or with a group: e.g. not Wheatear and wheatear). [In some cases, however, it was considered that a double name did not need a third element to distinguish it from a related species with a three-element name (e.g. Black Tern retained for *Chlidonias niger* despite the name White-winged Black Tern for *C. leucopterus*).]
4. When possible, names should accord with those adopted in other countries (particularly those where the species is commoner), but well-known English names should not necessarily change for this reason alone.
5. Ideally, all names should be unique on a world scale.
6. Highly inappropriate names should be changed, especially if they might lead to confusion, but minor cases should not be changed (e.g. Red-breasted Flycatcher should not be changed to Red-throated Flycatcher); changes made for other reasons, however, should always be to an appropriate name.
7. Simplification of names is a laudable aim, but not of high priority; it is to be welcomed when easily achieved.

Although the BOURC is responsible only for maintaining the British List (and not for maintaining any West Palearctic list), the three-man subcommittee deemed it essential to consider all the species recorded within the Western Palearctic, since it is when travelling abroad that birdwatchers meet the most problems in relation to name ambiguities. Of the 804 species in *The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1984), the subcommittee found some case for changing the English names of 351. Their recommendations, however, concerned name changes to only 192 species, of which 50 have not occurred in Britain, so that only 142 were the direct concern of the BOURC. The figure of 142 includes 13 species, mainly North American, where the recommended name is already in use in *British Birds*. The following list, however, contains comment on all the species for which English name changes were recommended and occasionally on those for which no change is recommended.

It is important that readers should appreciate that this list is provisional. The purpose of publication at this stage is to seek comment from English-speaking birdwatchers all over the world. We do not suggest

immediate adoption of the new names listed here, but invite comment over the next one-year period. After the receipt of comments and suggestions from birdwatchers in Britain and elsewhere, the BOU Records Committee will reassess the name changes suggested here, and then publish a new definitive list of English names.

Comments on individual name changes within the following list should be sent, to arrive before 1st October 1989, to the Secretary, Records Committee, BOU, c/o British Museum (Natural History), Sub-department of Ornithology, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP.

## List of suggested name changes

The numbers relate to the main reasons for a name change being required (see list above).

### **Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialis* TO BECOME **Northern Fulmar**

4, 5. Northern Fulmar is the name adopted by the American Ornithologists' Union (1983) and Harrison (1983), to distinguish this species from the Antarctic Fulmar *F. glacialisoides*. The name 'Northern Fulmar Petrel', which would have also satisfied principle 2, was regarded as too cumbersome.

### **Capped Petrel** *Pterodroma hasitata* TO BECOME **Black-capped Petrel**

4. This name is used by Harrison (1983) and by the American Ornithologists' Union (1983).

### **Wilson's Petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* TO BECOME **Wilson's Storm-Petrel**

1, 4. Dr W. R. P. Bourne (*Brit. Birds* 54: 407) and others have long pressed for the use of 'storm-petrel' in place of 'petrel' for members of the Hydrobatidae, to distinguish them from the true petrels in the Procellariidae. Harrison (1983) and many national and regional check-list committees have already adopted this, and we, therefore, are now coming into line with the majority view. Since the second part of the hyphenated name is a noun, that retains its initial capital letter.

### **Frigate Petrel** or **White-faced Petrel** *Pelagodroma marina* TO BECOME **White-faced Storm-Petrel**

1, 4. See Wilson's Petrel.

### **Storm Petrel** *Hydrobates pelagicus* TO BECOME **European Storm-Petrel**

1, 3, 4, 5. Mere hyphenation would satisfy principle 1, but an adjective needs to be added to make the English name of the species different from the English name of the family. The English name 'British Storm-Petrel' has been used by many authors, including Harrison (1983) and the American Ornithologists' Union (1983), but is most inappropriate, since the largest colonies of this species occur off Irish coasts and not off British coasts; hence our proposal of European Storm-Petrel, a name already adopted by Clancey (1980) and Alden (1983).

### **Leach's Petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* TO BECOME **Leach's Storm-Petrel**

1, 4. See Wilson's Petrel.

### **Swinhoe's Petrel** *Oceanodroma monorhis* TO BECOME **Swinhoe's Storm-Petrel**

1, 4. See Wilson's Petrel.

**Madeiran Petrel** *Oceanodroma castro* TO BECOME **Madeiran Storm-Petrel**

1, 4. With its range far from being restricted to the island of Madeira, several recent lists have named this species Band-rumped Storm Petrel, although Brown, Urban & Newman (1982) and Harrison (1983) use the name suggested here. If a substitute for the adjective Madeiran is required, a better name than Band-rumped Storm-Petrel would, in our view, be Harcourt's Storm-Petrel.

**Gannet** *Sula bassana* TO BECOME **Northern Gannet**

3, 4, 5. To distinguish this species from the Cape Gannet *S. capensis* and the Australasian Gannet *S. serrator*, the name Northern Gannet is used by both Harrison (1983) and the American Ornithologists' Union (1983).

**Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo* TO BECOME **Great Cormorant**

3, 4, 5. The name Great Cormorant is used by both Harrison (1983) and the American Ornithologists' Union (1983).

**White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* TO BECOME **Great White Pelican**

4, 5. To distinguish this species from the Nearctic *P. erythrorhynchos*, a unique English name is needed, and Great White Pelican, as used by Brown, Urban & Newman (1982), seems preferable to, for instance, Eastern White Pelican, which has sometimes been used.

**Schrenck's Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus eurhythmus* TO BECOME **Schrenck's Bittern**

4, 7.

**Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* TO BECOME **Great Bittern**

3, 4, 5. The name Eurasian Bittern has been used, but the BOURC prefers to avoid Eurasian whenever possible, since the most usual meaning of this word in the English language is 'of mixed European and Asiatic parentage'. The proposed name was used by King, Dickinson & Woodcock (1975) and is appropriate for the largest of the bitterns.

**Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* TO BECOME **Black-crowned Night Heron**

4, 5. The standard North American name (AOU 1983) is appropriate.

**Green Heron** *Butorides striatus* TO BECOME **Green-backed Heron**

4. The North American name (AOU 1983) was adopted by *British Birds* in 1978, and listed as an alternative name by Brown, Urban & Newman (1982).

**Western Reef Heron** *Egretta gularis* TO BECOME **Western Reef Egret**

2. It seems ridiculous that other species within the genus *Egretta* should be known as 'Egret', but that *E. gularis* (very closely related to if not conspecific with Little Egret *E. garzetta*) should be referred to as 'Heron'.

**Yellow-billed Egret** *Egretta intermedia* TO BECOME **Intermediate Egret**

4, 6. There are other yellow-billed egrets, and the alternative name of Intermediate Egret has already been adopted by Hancock & Elliott (1978) and the RAOU (1978); it has the advantage that it corresponds with the specific scientific name.

**Great White Egret** *Egretta alba* TO BECOME **Great Egret**

4, 7. Although there are other white egrets, none is known as 'White Egret', so the simplification will not lead to confusion.

**Heron** *Ardea cinerea* TO BECOME **Grey Heron**

3. This change was adopted by *British Birds* in 1972.

**Marabou** *Leptoptilos crumeniferus* TO BECOME **Marabou Stork**

2, 4. The BOURC considered that the trend within recent decades for group names to be dropped was tending to make ornithology elitist and more difficult for the beginner or general natural historian. Restoration of recently discarded group names was therefore recommended whenever appropriate. In this case, the proposed name is in line with usage throughout its wide range in Africa.

**Bald Ibis** *Geronticus eremita* TO BECOME **Northern Bald Ibis**

5. The South African species *G. calvus* is frequently referred to as Bald Ibis, and *G. eremita* as 'Hermit Ibis' or 'Waldrapp'. The name Northern Bald Ibis for *G. eremita*, already adopted by Collar & Stuart (1985), is helpful in showing that there are at least two closely related species and that this one is the more northern of them.

**Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* TO BECOME **White Spoonbill**

4, 5. A name already widespread, and used in Britain as long ago as 1839 (Yarrell).

**Bean/Pink-footed Goose** *Anser fabalis* TO BE SPLIT INTO TWO SPECIES

**Bean Goose** *A. fabalis*

**Pink-footed Goose** *A. brachyrhynchus*

This was adopted by *British Birds* in 1972 and by the BOU in 1980 (*Ibis* 122: 566).

**Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna* TO BECOME **Common Shelduck**

3, 4, 5. Although the adjective 'Common' is often best avoided, it was in this case regarded as appropriate, and is already widely used.

**Carolina Duck** *Aix sponsa* TO BECOME **Wood Duck**

4. Adopted by *British Birds* in 1978.

**Mandarin Duck** *Aix galericulata* TO REMAIN **Mandarin Duck**

2, 4. This species was listed as Mandarin Duck by the BOU (1971), but simplified to Mandarin by *British Birds* (71: 2) in 1978. This is a similar case to that of Marabou Stork, where a recently discarded group name can usefully be restored.

**Wigeon** *Anas penelope* TO BECOME **Eurasian Wigeon**

3, 4, 5. Widely used (e.g. AOU 1983) and usefully contrasts with American Wigeon *A. americana*. As noted under Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* (above), however, we would prefer to avoid the use of Eurasian, and welcome suggestions (one considered, but discarded in our vote, was Whistling Wigeon).

**Teal** *Anas crecca* TO BECOME **Green-winged Teal**

3, 4, 5. In the past, this English name has been used in Britain solely to describe the North American race *A. c. carolinensis*, but is used in North America (AOU 1983) for the species, and it seems appropriate that we in Britain should conform.

**Black Duck** *Anas rubripes* TO BECOME **American Black Duck**

4, 5. This change was adopted by *British Birds* in 1984 to distinguish this species from the African Black Duck *A. sparsa* and the Pacific Black Duck *A. superciliosa*.

**Pintail** *Anas acuta* TO BECOME **Northern Pintail**

3, 4, 5. Widely used (e.g. AOU 1983; Madge & Burn 1988) and appropriate.

**Shoveler** *Anas clypeata* TO BECOME **Northern Shoveler**

3, 4, 5. As Northern Pintail (see above); it is also convenient to have two similar new names.

**Pochard** *Aythya ferina* TO BECOME **Common Pochard**

3, 4, 5. Although Northern Pochard might not be inappropriate, the AOU (1983) has used Common Pochard, and this was the former name in Britain (Hartert *et al.* 1912).

**Scaup** *Aythya marila* TO BECOME **Greater Scaup**

3, 4, 5. The name used by, for instance, the AOU (1983) and Madge & Burn (1988).

**Eider** *Somateria mollissima* TO BECOME **Common Eider**

3, 4. Used not only by the AOU (1983) and Madge & Burn (1988), but also the old British name (Hartert *et al.* 1912). Although the adjective 'Common' is one which we prefer to avoid, this is one instance where it does seem appropriate.

**Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra* TO BECOME **Black Scoter**

4. In many areas, this species is not the commonest of the scoters. We therefore recommend the adoption of the name currently used in North America (AOU 1983). [The AOU has recently (1987) suggested that it may be best to recognise two separate species: American Scoter *M. americana* and Black Scoter *M. nigra*.]

**Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula* TO BECOME **Common Goldeneye**

3, 4. This is nearly everywhere the commonest goldeneye, and the proposed name is used by both the AOU (1983) and Madge & Burn (1988).

**Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* TO BECOME **Western Honey-Buzzard**

1, 5. The honey-buzzards in the genus *Pernis* are not regarded as being closely related to the buzzards in the genus *Buteo*. Hyphenation, therefore, to produce a compound name, is an instance comparable to that adopted for the storm-petrels (formerly petrels), and the name Honey-Buzzard was hyphenated in this way in the British literature as recently as 1952 (BOU). This species' eastern counterpart, *Pernis ptilorhynchus*, which is sometimes regarded as conspecific, is known under various names, such as Oriental Honey-Buzzard and Crested Honey-Buzzard. We recommend the name Western Honey-Buzzard to distinguish *P. apivorus* from that species and also from other southern honey-buzzards.

**Black Vulture** *Aegypius monachus* TO BECOME **Cinereous Vulture**

4, 5. The name Black Vulture is applied in North America to *Coragyps atratus*. The addition of an adjective (such as Eurasian) would be inappropriate, since the New World vultures and Old World vultures are regarded as quite unrelated by Voous (1977). We propose the adoption of the name used, for instance, by Brown, Urban & Newman (1982).

**Dark Chanting Goshawk** *Melierax metabates* TO BECOME **Dark Chanting-Goshawk**

1. Another instance (such as those for the storm-petrels and honey-buzzards) where the inclusion of a hyphen demonstrates that this species is not closely related to the goshawks in the genus *Accipiter*.

**Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis* TO BECOME **Northern Goshawk**

4, 5. Widely used (e.g. AOU 1983).

**Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus* TO BECOME **Northern Sparrowhawk**

3, 4, 5. We prefer the appropriate Northern, which links with Northern Goshawk and has been used by King, Dickinson & Woodcock (1975), to the alternatives used elsewhere, such as European or Eurasian.

**Buzzard** *Buteo buteo* TO BECOME **Common Buzzard**

3, 4, 5. An instance where the adjective Common is appropriate; and this was the former British name (Hartert *et al.* 1912).

**Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga* TO BECOME **Greater Spotted Eagle**

3, 4. The term 'spotted eagles' is occasionally used, and the adoption of this name would bring the *Aquila pomarina*/*A. clanga* pair into line with, for instance, Lesser Sand Plover/*Greater Sand Plover* *Charadrius mongolus*/*C. leschenaultii*.

**Tawny/Steppe Eagle** *Aquila rapax* TO REMAIN **Tawny/Steppe Eagle**



The Committee firmly adopted the principle that a single English name should be used for each species, but that subspecies did not merit separate English names. The Committee was, however, unable to resolve its differences concerning the relative merits of Tawny Eagle and Steppe Eagle for this species, and we note that Hollom *et al.* (1988) have treated Tawny and Steppe Eagles as two separate species.

### **Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* TO BECOME Common Kestrel**

3, 4, 5. With more than a dozen species of *Falco* referred to as kestrels, and Greater Kestrel already in standard use for *F. rupicoloides*, we prefer to adopt Common Kestrel, as used by, for instance, Brown, Urban & Newman (1982), than the inappropriate European Kestrel or slightly misleading Eurasian Kestrel. Rock Kestrel, used as an alternative name by Brown, Urban & Newman (1982), does not reflect its habitat over most of its range.

### **Hobby *Falco subbuteo* TO BECOME Northern Hobby**

4, 5. In contrast to the African *F. cuvierii*, Oriental *F. severus* and Australian *F. longipennis*; this name, already used by King, Dickinson & Woodcock (1975) and the AOU (1983), links with Northern Goshawk and Northern Sparrowhawk.

### **Lanner *Falco biarmicus* TO BECOME Lanner Falcon**

2, 4. It is only relatively recently that the group name Falcon has been dropped from this species in the British literature. As in the cases of Marabou Stork and Mandarin Duck, we recommend restoration of the more meaningful and widely used name.

### **Saker *Falco cherrug* TO BECOME Saker Falcon**

2, 4. As Lanner Falcon.

### **Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* TO REMAIN Gyr Falcon**

2. This species was listed as Gyr Falcon by the BOU (1971), but the two words have increasingly been merged to become Gyrfalcon in the ornithological literature, a trend which we deplore.

### **Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* TO BECOME Peregrine Falcon**

2, 4. We propose to restore this species' former name (BOU 1952) so that as many species as possible in the genus *Falco* have Falcon in their name. (Unless urged otherwise, we regard the addition of Falcon to the long-established Kestrel, Merlin and Hobby as unjustified, unlike the *restoration* of Falcon to those names from which it has relatively recently been removed.)

### **Willow/Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus* TO REMAIN Willow/Red Grouse**

4. Although we consider that all species should have a single distinct English name, and that no subspecies should be given a different English name, we found it impossible to resolve within the Committee the merits of Willow Grouse (inappropriate in a British context) and Red Grouse (a very long established name here).

### **Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus* TO BECOME Western Capercaillie**

4, 5. A name already adopted by Alden (1983) to distinguish this species from the eastern Black-billed Capercaillie *T. parvirostris*.

### **Bobwhite Quail *Colinus virginianus* TO BECOME Northern Bobwhite**

4. Adopted by *British Birds* in 1984 to conform with AOU (1983) usage.

### **Chukar *Alectoris chukar* TO BECOME Chukar Partridge**

2, 4. A similar case to Marabou Stork, Mandarin Duck, Lanner Falcon, and so on.

### **See-see *Ammoperdix griseogularis* TO BECOME See-see Partridge**

2, 4. See Chukar Partridge (above).

**Partridge *Perdix perdix* TO BECOME Grey Partridge**

3. This name was adopted by *British Birds* (71: 2) in 1978.

**Quail *Coturnix coturnix* TO BECOME Common Quail**

4, 5. The name adopted by, for instance, Urban, Fry & Keith (1986), and in use in Britain as long ago as 1839 (Yarrell).

**Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* TO BECOME Common Pheasant**

3, 4, 5. Another instance where the adjective Common is appropriate; as with Common Quail, this name was used as long ago as 1839 (Yarrell). The name Ring-necked Pheasant, adopted by the AOU (1983), is inappropriate because it applies only to certain populations of this widespread and variable species.

**Andalusian Hemipode *Turnix sylvatica* TO BECOME Striped Button-Quail**

1, 2, 5. Although several members of the Committee regretted the disappearance of the wonderfully euphonious name Andalusian Hemipode, it was felt that the name of this species should fall into line with others in the genus *Turnix*, which are called button-quails or quails. As in other cases (e.g. storm-petrel, honey-buzzard), hyphenation is necessary to distinguish the button-quails in the family Turnicidae from the quails in the family Phasianidae. Although Little Button-Quail has been used for *T. sylvatica* (e.g. King, Dickinson & Woodcock 1975; Urban, Fry & Keith 1986), that name has long been applied to the Australian *T. velox*, so we recommend the adoption of Striped Button-Quail.

**Sora Rail *Porzana carolina* TO BECOME Sora Crane**

2. This Nearctic species is only a vagrant to our area, but the move by the AOU (1983) to drop its group name is, we believe, a retrograde step (see Marabou Stork, Peregrine Falcon, etc.). Further, within the Rallidae, we believe that it is sensible that all the long-billed species in the genus *Rallus* should be known as rails and all the short-billed species in the genus *Porzana* as cranes. This species was formerly known as Carolina Crane. Now, as the odd one out among the *Porzana* species, we recommend the adoption of Sora Crane, a name already used by Alden & Gooders (1981).

**Black Crane *Limnecorax flavirostra* TO BECOME African Black Crane**

5. This is necessary to distinguish it from the American Black Crane *Laterallus jamaicensis*. This is a widespread New World species which is called Black Rail by the AOU (1983), but elsewhere in its range it is called Black Crane (Meyer de Schauensee 1982; Bond 1985), a name in keeping with all other species in the genus. Alden & Gooders (1981) have already adopted the names African Black Crane and American Black Crane for these two species.

**Corncrake *Crex crex* TO BECOME Corn Crane**

2, 4. Formerly Land Rail or Corn Crane, this species' name has merged in the same way that Gyr Falcon became Gyr Falcon. We believe that it is more helpful to show relationships by restoring the name to its two portions, as Corn Crane.

**Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* TO BECOME Common Moorhen**

4. Formerly called Common Gallinule in the USA, but now (AOU 1983) referred to as Common Moorhen.

**American Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica* TO REMAIN American Purple Gallinule**

With the name change proposed (below) for *Porphyrio porphyrio*, the adjective American becomes redundant for this species, but we believe that it would result in confusion to have the name Purple Gallinule adopted for *Porphyrio martinica* simultaneously with the removal of this English name for *Porphyrio porphyrio*.

**Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio porphyrio* TO BECOME Purple Swampen**

3, 4, 5. Confusion with *Porphyrio martinica* can be removed completely by adoption of the

name widely used elsewhere in the world already (e.g. King, Dickinson & Woodcock 1975; Urban, Fry & Keith 1986).

**Coot** *Fulica atra* TO BECOME **Black Coot**

3, 5. A name which (as with Black Scoter) we prefer to Common Coot, European Coot, Eurasian Coot, and so on, which are all less appropriate for various reasons.

**Crested Coot** *Fulica cristata* TO BECOME **Red-knobbed Coot**

4, 6. This species does not have a crest; it does have two small red knobs. The name Red-knobbed Coot has long been in use throughout sub-Saharan Africa and has been adopted by, for example, Urban, Fry & Keith (1986).

**Crane** *Grus grus* TO BECOME **Common Crane**

3, 4, 5. One of the few instances where the adjective Common is appropriate; it was also the former British name (Hartert *et al.* 1912).

**Siberian White Crane** *Grus leucogeranus* TO BECOME **Siberian Crane**

4, 7.

**Painted Snipe** *Rostratula benghalensis* TO BECOME **Greater Painted-Snipe**

1, 4, 5. The inclusion of the hyphen is intended to stress the dissimilarities of the painted-snipes within the Rostratulidae and the true snipes *Gallinago* in the Scolopacidae (we prefer Painted-snipe to the awkward-looking Paintedsnipe used by, for instance, King, Dickinson & Woodcock 1975). The adjective Greater is that usually used to distinguish this species from the South American Painted-Snipe *Nycticryphes semicollaris*.

**Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* TO BECOME **Northern Pied Oystercatcher**

3, 5. Although it will inevitably remain merely as Oystercatcher in common field use throughout the Western Palearctic, there is a need for a unique world name. *Haematopus ostralegus* is closely related to the Australasian *H. longirostris*, which the RAOU (1978) and Hayman, Marchant & Prater (1986) called Pied Oystercatcher, but which White & Bruce (1986) named Australian Pied Oystercatcher.

**Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta* TO BECOME **Pied Avocet**

3, 4, 5. This name was adopted by King, Dickinson & Woodcock (1975) and Hayman, Marchant & Prater (1986).

**Stone Curlew** or **Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oediconemus* TO BECOME **Northern Thick-knee**

2. Other species in the genera *Burhinus* and *Esacus* are generally known as Thick-knee or Dikkop. Restoration to *B. oediconemus* of the old Norfolk name of Thick-knee is surely to be welcomed; the addition of the adjective Northern is appropriate.

**Egyptian Plover** *Pluvianus aegyptius* TO BECOME **Crocodile-Plover**

1, 5, 6. This strange species is clearly not closely related to the plovers in the family Charadriidae. It has been included with the coursers and pratincoles in the Glareolidae, but the names Egyptian Courser or Egyptian Pratincole would be inappropriate. It has also been known as the Crocodile-bird and, of many possible names, we recommend the adoption of Crocodile-Plover.

**Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferus* TO BECOME **Killdeer Plover**

2. This Nearctic species is only a vagrant to our area, and the AOU (1983) retains its name as simply Killdeer. It was, however, not until 1971 that the group name Plover was dropped by the BOU (1952, 1971) on this side of the Atlantic. With two exceptions, all other West Palearctic species in the Charadriidae are called Plover.

**Kittlitz's Sand Plover** *Charadrius pecuarius* TO BECOME **Kittlitz's Plover**

4, 7. We deplore the contraction of, for instance, Lesser Sand Plover to Lesser Sandplover;

Kentish Plover is not known as Kentish Sand Plover, so we prefer the word Sand to be restricted to the two species *C. mongolus* and *C. leschenaultii*.

**Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus* TO BECOME **Mountain Dotterel**

5.

**Lesser Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* TO BE SPLIT INTO TWO SPECIES (Knox 1987)

**American Golden Plover** *P. dominica*

**Pacific Golden Plover** *P. fulva*

3, 5. These names have already been adopted by Hayman, Marchant & Prater (1986).

**Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria* TO BECOME **European Golden Plover**

3, 5. Although the breeding distribution does extend into Asia, this is largely a European bird and we regard European Golden Plover as far preferable to Eurasian Golden Plover. The name Greater Golden Plover, adopted by the AOU (1983), is not appropriate as we no longer have a Lesser Golden Plover.

**Blackhead Plover** *Hoplopterus tectus* TO BECOME **Black-headed Plover**

4, 6. Called Black-headed Lapwing or Blackhead Plover by Urban, Fry & Keith (1986), but Black-headed Plover by Hayman, Marchant & Prater (1986) which we greatly prefer.

**Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus* TO BECOME **Northern Lapwing**

4, 5. Of the 24 species in the genus *Vanellus* (in the broad view of the genus, rather than the narrow view adopted by Voous 1977), Hayman, Marchant & Prater (1986) used Lapwing for 13 and Plover for 11, with no apparent logic, apart from tradition (and even that is debatable in a number of instances). Some members of the BOU Records Committee would be in favour of a return to the old British name of Green Plover for *V. vanellus*, to conform with the other West Palearctic species in the Charadriidae known as Plover. The majority view, however, was that the now-well-established name Lapwing should be retained, with the addition of the adjective Northern to distinguish it from the dozen-or-so other species known as Lapwing. Northern Lapwing is the name used by Hayman, Marchant & Prater (1986). Urban, Fry & Keith (1986) treated all the *Vanellus*-type plovers as lapwings.

**Knot** *Calidris canutus* TO BECOME **Red Knot**

3, 4. We preferred Red Knot (as used by AOU 1983; Hayman, Marchant & Prater 1986), rather than Lesser Knot (in contrast to Great Knot *C. tenuirostris*).

**Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis* TO BECOME **Rufous-necked Stint**

4, 6. This species has only recently been added to the West Palearctic list. The names Red-necked Stint and Rufous-necked Stint appear to be used about equally in the English-language checklists. The colour is nearer to rufous than to red (but, since the BOURC made this recommendation, Hayman, Marchant & Prater 1986 have plumped for Red-necked Stint). We welcome opinions.

**Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* TO BECOME **Common Snipe**

3, 4, 5. Restoration of this species' former British name (BOU 1952) is appropriate.

**Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola* TO BECOME **Eurasian Woodcock**

4, 5. Despite the BOURC's reluctance to use the word Eurasian, no suitable alternative could be found (Roding Woodcock had some supporters, but was thought to be potentially confusing), and this name has now been used by, for instance, King, Dickinson & Woodcock (1975) and Hayman, Marchant & Prater (1986). We welcome proposals.

**Little Whimbrel** *Numenius minutus* TO BECOME **Little Curlew**

4, 6. This species has only recently been added to the West Palearctic list. Although it shows resemblances to the Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, its closest relation is the Eskimo Curlew *N. borealis*. If *N. minutus* is named Little Whimbrel, then an adjective needs to be

added to Whimbrel for *N. phaeopus* (e.g. Great Whimbrel). For these two reasons, Little Curlew (the name adopted by the RAOU 1978 and Hayman, Marchant & Prater 1986) was preferred to Little Whimbrel.

### **Curlew *Numenius arquata* TO BECOME Western Curlew**

3, 5. We preferred Western Curlew, in contrast to the Eastern Curlew (or Far Eastern Curlew) *N. madagascariensis* of Siberia, rather than Common, European or Eurasian Curlew, all of which were inappropriate to various degrees and for various reasons.

### **Redshank *Tringa totanus* TO BECOME Common Redshank**

3, 4. Restoration of this species' old British name (Hartert *et al.* 1912) is wholly appropriate.

### **Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* TO BECOME Common Greenshank**

4, 5. A name that is already widely used and not inappropriate in contrast to the Asiatic Nordmann's Greenshank (or Spotted Greenshank) *Tringa guttifer*, the name linking with that chosen for *T. totanus*.

### **Grey-rumped Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes* TO BECOME Grey-tailed Tattler**

4. This species has only just been added to the British and Irish list (*Ibis* 130: 334). Formerly known here as Grey-rumped Sandpiper, but the generally accepted name is now Grey-tailed Tattler (e.g. Hayman, Marchant & Prater 1986).

### **Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* TO BECOME Ruddy Turnstone**

4, 5. The standard name for this widespread species (e.g. AOU 1983; Hayman, Marchant & Prater 1986).

### **Common Gull *Larus canus* TO BECOME Mew Gull**

4, 6. Perhaps the most inappropriate use of the adjective Common among current bird names: almost nowhere is it the most commonly occurring gull. Although recent British authors (e.g. Grant 1982; Harrison 1983) have retained the name Common Gull, and there have been unsuccessful attempts in Britain in the past to popularise the name Mew Gull (e.g. Nicholson 1949), the latter is now widely used elsewhere (e.g. AOU 1983; Urban, Fry & Keith 1986) and we recommend its general adoption.

### **Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* TO BECOME Black-legged Kittiwake**

4, 5. The generally accepted name (e.g. AOU 1983; Harrison 1983) to distinguish this species from Red-legged Kittiwake *R. brevirostris*.

### **Crested Tern *Sterna bergii* TO BECOME Greater Crested Tern**

3, 4. We prefer Greater Crested Tern, in contrast to Lesser Crested Tern *S. bengalensis*, rather than the usual alternative, Swift Tern.

### **Guillemot *Uria aalge* TO BECOME Common Guillemot**

3. Known in North America as Common Murre (AOU 1983), so a return to the old British name (Hartert *et al.* 1912) would at least introduce identical adjectives (Common) on both sides of the Atlantic.

### **Puffin *Fratercula arctica* TO BECOME Atlantic Puffin**

4, 5. This widely used name (e.g. AOU 1983; Harrison 1983) is appropriate.

### **Rock Dove *Columba livia* TO BECOME Rock Pigeon**

1, 2, 4. After consultation with the author of the definitive work (Goodwin 1970), we recommend that the structurally more robust members of the Columbidae in the genus *Columba* should be referred to as pigeons, whereas the more delicately built species, mostly in the genus *Streptopelia*, should be referred to as doves.

### **Stock Dove *Columba oenas* TO BECOME Stock Pigeon**

1, 2. See Rock Pigeon (above).

**Yellow-eyed Stock Dove** *Columba eversmanni* TO BECOME **Yellow-eyed Pigeon**

1, 2, 7. See Rock Pigeon (above).

**Woodpigeon** *Columba palumbus* TO BECOME **Common Wood Pigeon**

2, 5. This is by far the most common and widespread of the various species in the world which are referred to as Wood Pigeons. Separation of Woodpigeon into two words, Wood Pigeon, follows the same principle as that adopted for Gyr Falcon, Corn Crake, and so on.

**Long-toed Pigeon** *Columba trocaz* TO BECOME **Trocaz Pigeon**

4. Used by Goodwin (1970).

**Bolle's Laurel Pigeon** *Columba bollii* TO BECOME **Bolle's Pigeon**

7.

**Pink-headed Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia roseogrisea* TO BECOME **Pink-headed Dove**

4, 7. The appearance and relationships of this species are, in any case, closer to those of Collared Dove *S. decaocto* than Turtle Dove *S. turtur*.

**Rufous Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia orientalis* TO BECOME **Eastern Turtle Dove**

4. This species is known as Rufous Turtle Dove only in Britain, where it is a vagrant. It is generally known either as Eastern Turtle Dove (e.g. Goodwin 1970) or Oriental Turtle Dove (e.g. King, Dickinson & Woodcock 1975). Since the distribution is not restricted to the Orient, a majority of members preferred the adjective Eastern (although a minority voted for Oriental, in line with the scientific name). We welcome comments.

**Ring-necked Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri* TO BECOME **Rose-ringed Parakeet**

4.

**Jacobin Cuckoo** *Clamator jacobinus* TO BECOME **Pied Cuckoo**

4.

**Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* TO BECOME **Common Cuckoo**

3, 4. A return to the old British name (Yarrell 1839), and one which has been adopted even in the USA (AOU 1983), where it is only a vagrant.

**Scops Owl** *Otus scops* TO BECOME **European Scops Owl**

3, 5. The range of this species extends marginally outside Europe, but European is more appropriate than the alternative names Common or Eurasian.

**Hume's Tawny Owl** *Strix butleri* TO BECOME **Hume's Owl**

7. A name adopted by Mikkola (1983), who pointed out how dissimilar this species is from Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*.

**Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus* TO BECOME **European Nightjar**

3, 4, 5. The adjective European is appropriate not only because of this species' largely European distribution, but also since it reflects the scientific name.

**Nighthawk** *Chordeiles minor* TO BECOME **Common Nighthawk**

4. Adopted by *British Birds* (71: 2) in 1978.

**Needle-tailed Swift** *Hirundapus caudacutus* TO BECOME **White-throated Needletail**

4, 5. There are many 'needle-tailed swifts'. This species is widely known elsewhere as White-throated Needletail (e.g. King, Dickinson & Woodcock 1975; RAOU 1978). Several members of the Committee argued forcefully for the retention of the word Swift (White-

throated Needletail Swift), to retain the group name (principle 2), but the majority view was for the shorter name.

**Swift** *Apus apus* TO BECOME **Common Swift**

3, 4, 5. The former British name (Yarrell 1839) and widely used elsewhere (e.g. AOU 1983).

**Palm Swift** *Cypsiurus parvus* TO BECOME **African Palm Swift**

4, 5. The name used by, for instance, Clancey (1980) and Alden & Gooders (1981) to distinguish this species from the Asian Palm Swift *C. balasiensis*.

**White-breasted Kingfisher** *Halcyon smyrnensis* TO BECOME **White-throated Kingfisher**

4. Although some members favoured a return to the former Smyrna Kingfisher (reflecting the scientific name), there is no doubt that the most commonly used English name within the species' usual range is White-throated Kingfisher.

**Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis* TO BECOME **River Kingfisher**

3, 5. Given as an alternative name by Alden & Gooders (1981) and preferred to the mundane (and often untrue) alternative, Common Kingfisher.

**Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* TO BECOME **European Bee-eater**

3, 4, 5. The name adopted by Fry (1984).

**Roller** *Coracias garrulus* TO BECOME **European Roller**

3, 4, 5. Appropriate on the basis of range, and also linking with European Bee-eater.

**Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* TO BECOME **Northern Wryneck**

5.

**Levaillant's Green Woodpecker** *Picus vaillantii* TO BECOME **Levaillant's Woodpecker**

7.

**Woodlark** *Lullula arborea* TO BECOME **Wood Lark**

2, 4.

**Oriental Skylark** *Alauda gulgula* TO BECOME **Oriental Sky Lark**

2, 4. A recent addition to the West Palearctic list (*Brit. Birds* 79: 186-197). Although the names Little or Small Sky Lark are sometimes used, we prefer the adjective Oriental, since there is extensive overlap in measurements between this species and Sky Lark *A. arvensis*.

**Skylark** *Alauda arvensis* TO BECOME **Sky Lark**

2.

**Shore Lark** *Eremophila alpestris* TO BECOME **Horned Lark**

3. This species is far more well known in the Nearctic than in the Palearctic. It is a bird found typically on the shore only in its rather unimportant west European wintering areas. This is its well-established North American name (AOU 1983).

**Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* TO REMAIN **Crag Martin**

The Dusky Martin *P. concolor* of Southern Asia is frequently associated with old buildings rather than crags.

**Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* TO BECOME **Barn Swallow**

3, 4, 5. The North Americans (AOU 1983) and, subsequently, many English-speaking ornithologists throughout this species' wide range (e.g. King, Dickinson & Woodcock 1975) have used this delightfully appropriate name.



**Cliff Swallow** *Hirundo pyrrhonota* TO BECOME **American Cliff Swallow**

5. Although the AOU (1983) uses the name Cliff Swallow, the addition of an extra adjective is necessary to distinguish it from various African species, including the recently discovered Red Sea Cliff Swallow *H. perditia*, which could occur in the West Palearctic.

**Rock Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta* TO BE SPLIT INTO THREE SPECIES

**Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta*

**Rock Pipit** *Anthus petrosus*

**Buff-bellied Pipit** *Anthus rubescens*

3, 5, 6. With the splitting of *A. spinoletta* into three separate species (Knox 1988), we recommend that the names Water Pipit (previously applied to the alpine-breeding and lowland, inland-water wintering races) and Rock Pipit be retained. Although the name American Pipit has been applied in the past to *A. (s.) rubescens* (e.g. BOU 1952), its distribution is as much East Palearctic as Nearctic and the name Buff-bellied Pipit, proposed by Per Alström (verbally), was endorsed by the founder members of the West Palearctic List Committee in 1986.

**Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* TO REMAIN **Pied Wagtail**

All races of this species are pied; none is white.

**Yellow-vented Bulbul** *Pycnonotus xanthopygos* TO BECOME **White-spectacled Bulbul**

5, 6. With the name Yellow-vented Bulbul already used for *P. goiavier* by King, Dickinson & Woodcock (1975) and for *P. barbatus* by Williams & Arlott (1980), an alternative name is needed. Voous (1977) used Black-capped Bulbul, but we prefer to draw attention to a more diagnostic feature of the species, with the name White-spectacled Bulbul.

**Common Bulbul** *Pycnonotus barbatus* TO BECOME **Garden Bulbul**

6. There are over 60 species in the family Pycnonotidae to which the name Bulbul has been applied, and this one is the commonest only in parts of Africa. In proposing the name Garden Bulbul, which is already used by Alden & Gooders (1981), we have deliberately chosen to refer to one of the species' most frequent habitats.

**Waxwing** *Bombycilla garrulus* TO BECOME **Bohemian Waxwing**

4, 5. With its meaning as 'a wanderer with irregular habits', the adjective is delightfully appropriate, was a former name of the species in Britain (Yarrell 1839), and is the established name in North America (AOU 1983).

**Dipper** *Cinclus cinclus* TO BECOME **White-throated Dipper**

4, 5. This descriptive name was used by, for example, King, Dickinson & Woodcock (1975).

**Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes* TO BECOME **Northern Wren**

4, 5. Although the AOU (1983) calls this species Winter Wren, that name is not appropriate within the bulk of the species' range, where there are no migratory wrens in comparison with which *T. troglodytes* is the one that stays for the winter. This is, however, the most northerly wren in the world, and the name Northern Wren, already adopted by King, Dickinson & Woodcock (1975), would be appropriate throughout its range.

**Dunnock** *Prunella modularis* TO BECOME **Hedge Accentor**

2. Although not a sparrow (Passeridae), this species was known as Hedge-Sparrow until 1953, when *British Birds* (46: 3) adopted the name Dunnock, but with Hedge Sparrow as an alternative. The other 12 species in the Prunellidae are all referred to as Accentor. In retrospect, it would have been logical to have changed the name in 1953 to Hedge Accentor, but, instead, the archaic English name Dunnock was resurrected. In an attempt to resolve this anomaly, Harrison (1982) changed the names of all the other species in the genus *Prunella* to Dunnock (e.g. Alpine Dunnock *P. collaris*, Siberian Dunnock *P. montanella*), calling *P. modularis* European Dunnock. Much as we like the name Dunnock ('brown and small') in

its own right, it seems unreasonable to try to impose this strictly English name for use throughout the world on species which seldom or never occur here. Although certain members of the Committee passionately defended the retention of Dunnock, the majority of the Committee favoured the simple change to Hedge Accentor. Traditionalists who urge the retention of old English names may care to note that *British Birds* did not introduce the name Dunnock for this species until 1953 (and the BOU not until 1971), but that the name Hedge Accentor was in use as long ago as 1839 (Yarrell).

**Rufous Bush Chat or Rufous Bush Robin** *Cercotrichas galactotes* TO BECOME **Rufous Scrub-Robin**

1, 4. As opinions concerning the taxonomic affinities of this species have changed, so has its name: Rufous Warbler (BOU 1952), to Rufous Bush Chat (BOU 1971) to Rufous Bush Robin. While considering mere hyphenation, to give the name Rufous Bush-Robin, we felt that it was appropriate to follow the line adopted by Serle, Morel & Hartwig (1977) and Alden & Gooders (1981), who have used Scrub-Robin for all species in the genus *Cercotrichas*.

**Black Bush Robin** *Cercotrichas podobe* TO BECOME **Black Scrub-Robin**

2, 4. See Rufous Scrub-Robin (above).

**Robin** *Erithacus rubecula* TO BECOME **European Robin**

3, 4, 5.

**Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos* TO BECOME **Common Nightingale**

3.

**Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* TO BECOME **Common Redstart**

3, 5.

**Canary Islands Stonechat** *Saxicola dacotiae* TO REMAIN **Canary Islands Stonechat**

It is not clear whether *S. dacotiae* was derived from Stonechat *S. torquata* or Whinchat *S. rubetra* (Hall & Moreau 1970), and the name Canary Islands Chat may therefore be more appropriate. We welcome opinions.

**Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata* TO BECOME **Common Stonechat**

3, 5. There are two closely related species elsewhere in the world: the Réunion Stonechat *S. tectes* and the White-tailed Stonechat *S. leucura*. These are both sometimes treated as conspecific with *S. torquata*, so giving them all a common ground name draws attention to their similarities.

**Ant-chat** *Myrmecocichla aethiops* TO BECOME **Northern Ant-Chat**

5. This species, known as the Anteater Chat by Williams & Arlott (1980), forms a superspecies with the Ant-eating Chat *M. formicivora* of Southern Africa. We think it would be more appropriate to call them Northern and Southern Ant-Chat respectively, as already adopted by Alden & Gooders (1981).

**Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* TO BECOME **Northern Wheatear**

3, 4, 5. This name was recommended by Clement & Harris (1987) and had already been adopted by the AOU (1983).

**Eastern Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe picata* TO BECOME **Variable Wheatear**

4, 6. The former name might be taken as indicating that *O. picata* is an eastern form of *O. pleschanka*, so we recommend the name adopted by Alden (1983) for this variable species. It is possible that there are no valid records of this species for the West Palearctic (*Brit. Birds* 80: 153).

**White-crowned Black Wheatear** *Oenanthe leucopyga* TO BECOME **White-tailed Black Wheatear**

6. Since many individuals of this species do not exhibit a white crown, but all have a

largely white tail (which distinguishes them from all Black Wheatears *O. leucura*), this name change is recommended.

**Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis* TO BECOME **Mountain Rock Thrush**

3, 5. There are many species which have in their name the elements Rock Thrush, so an additional adjective was required. This new name is proposed.

**Olive-backed Thrush** *Catharus ustulatus* TO BECOME **Swainson's Thrush**

4. Adopted by *British Birds* in 1978 (71: 2).

**Blackbird** *Turdus merula* TO BECOME **Common Blackbird**

4, 5. No other species is called Black Thrush, and this would clearly be the best name (applying principle 2), but the name Blackbird has such a long history and is so well established for this very common and familiar garden bird that we lacked the courage to suggest a major change. It is worth noting, however, that MacGillivray (1839) adopted the name Black Thrush.

**Eye-browed Thrush** *Turdus obscurus* TO BECOME **Eyebrowed Thrush**

6, 7. This tiny change merely corrects the English usage (unlike Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*, which has a brow which is yellow, this species has an eyebrow, not a brow which resembles an eye).

**Dusky/Naumann's Thrush** *Turdus naumanni* TO BECOME **Dusky Thrush**

7. Selecting a single name for a species which has previously had separate English names applied to the different races is never easy, but the adjective dusky can be applied no less appropriately to *T. n. naumanni* than to *T. n. eunomus*; Howard & Moore (1980) had already made this decision.

**Black-throated/Red-throated Thrush** *Turdus ruficollis* TO BECOME **Dark-throated Thrush**

4, 7. As with Dusky Thrush (see above), a single name, equally descriptive for both races, is needed; we recommend the name adopted by Alden (1983).

**American Robin** *Turdus migratorius* TO REMAIN **American Robin**

The retention of this name (which ought to be changed, following principle 1) is in acknowledgment of its long-established use in North America (AOU 1983); indeed, several American species in the genus *Turdus* are given the name Robin.

**Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis* TO BECOME **Common Whitethroat**

3.

**Plain Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus neglectus* TO BECOME **Plain Warbler**

7.

**Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* TO BECOME **Common Chiffchaff**

3. The alternative, Woodland Chiffchaff, in contrast to Mountain Chiffchaff *P. sindianus*, was preferred by only a minority of the Committee.

**Brown Flycatcher** *Muscicapa latirostris* TO BECOME **Asian Brown Flycatcher**

4, 5. Although recently named Gray-breasted Flycatcher by the AOU (1987), Asian Brown Flycatcher is the name widely used throughout the species' main range (e.g. King, Dickinson & Woodcock 1975).

**Bearded Tit** *Panurus biarmicus* TO BECOME **Bearded Parrotbill**

1. Restricting the name Tit to species in the family Paridae, and wishing to indicate the probable relationship of this species, we considered Bearded Tit-Babbler, but dismissed that since the name Tit-Babbler is used for several species in the genera *Macronous* and

*Micromacronous*; whereas *Panurus biarmicus* appears to be more closely related to *Conostoma* and *Paradoxornis*, all of which are known as Parrotbills. We considered, but dismissed, the use of the old British name Reedling which is unhelpful in not indicating the species' probable relationship (comparable to the unfortunate introduction of Dunnock for *Prunella modularis* 35 years ago). Although actually whiskered or moustached (rather than bearded), we preferred to retain at least part of the species' previous English name.

**Brown Babbler** *Turdoides squamiceps* TO BECOME **Arabian Babbler**

6. Brown Babbler has long been used for the African *T. plebejus*, and the proposed name, already used by Heinzel, Fitter & Parslow (1972) and Hollom *et al.* (1988), accurately reflects its distribution.

**Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus* TO BECOME **Long-tailed Bush-Tit**

1. Restricting use of the name Tit to species in the Paridae, we have proposed a relatively minor name change, so that all species in the Aegithalidae are known as Bush-Tits (as those in the genus *Psaltriparus* are already). The objection that the genera *Aegithalos* and *Psaltriparus* form an artificial grouping and are not closely related may be valid. We welcome comments, and suggestions for an alternative name which would not imply a close relationship with the Paridae.

**Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea* TO BECOME **Wood Nuthatch**

3, 5. We preferred a new evocative name to the use of, for instance, Common Nuthatch.

**Great Rock Nuthatch** *Sitta tephronota* TO BECOME **Eastern Rock Nuthatch**

3, 5, 6.

**Rock Nuthatch** *Sitta neumayer* TO BECOME **Western Rock Nuthatch**

3, 5.

**Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris* TO BECOME **Common Treecreeper**

3, 4, 5. The AOU (1983) referred to this species as European Treecreeper, but that is hardly an appropriate name considering the world distribution of Short-toed Treecreeper *C. brachydactyla*. Common Treecreeper is, perhaps, hardly more appropriate, and we welcome proposals for a suitable distinctive name for this species.

**Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus* TO BECOME **Masked Penduline-Tit**

1, 3, 5. With the name Tit restricted to the species in the Paridae, the use of Penduline-Tit as a compound name seems the simplest change; we have coined the name Masked Penduline-Tit as a descriptive name for this species.

**Nile Valley Sunbird** *Anthreptes metallicus* TO BECOME **Eastern Pygmy Sunbird**

2. Since the form *metallicus* may be a separate species or a race of Pygmy Sunbird *A. platurus*, which was omitted in error from *The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic*, we considered it appropriate to refer to these as Eastern Pygmy Sunbird and Western Pygmy Sunbird, respectively.

**Orange-tufted Sunbird** *Nectarinia osea* TO BECOME **Northern Orange-tufted Sunbird**

4, 5. *N. bouvieri* is often also known as Orange-tufted Sunbird (e.g. by Williams & Arlott 1980), so we considered that *N. osea* and *N. bouvieri* were better known as Northern Orange-tufted Sunbird and Southern Orange-tufted Sunbird respectively. The former name has already been adopted by Williams & Arlott (1980).

**Black-headed Bush Shrike** *Tchagra senegala* TO BECOME **Black-crowned Tchagra**

4. This is the name by which this species is generally known in Africa (e.g. Clancey 1980; Serle, Morel & Hartwig 1977). A minority on the Committee fought a rearguard action to

retain the word Shrike (principle 2), so that all the West Palearctic species in the family Laniidae would still be known as Shrike, but this was outvoted. Subsequently, Hollom *et al.* (1988) have retained the current name, Black-headed Bush Shrike.

**Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio* TO BE SPLIT INTO TWO SPECIES

**Isabelline Shrike** *L. isabellinus*

**Red-backed Shrike** *L. collurio*

Adopted by *British Birds* (71: 2) in 1978 and the BOU in 1980 (*Ibis* 122: 566).

**Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* TO REMAIN **Woodchat Shrike**

We wish to stem the trend towards abbreviating this name to Woodchat (cf. Marabou Stork).

**Jay** *Garrulus glandarius* TO BECOME **Acorn Jay**

3, 5. A newly coined name, which we preferred to, for instance, Eurasian Jay.

**Magpie** *Pica pica* TO BECOME **Black-billed Magpie**

3, 4, 5. This is the name used in North America (AOU 1983) to distinguish *P. pica* from Yellow-billed Magpie *P. nuttalli*.

**Nutcracker** *Nucifraga caryocatactes* TO BECOME **Spotted Nutcracker**

4, 5. The name adopted by Alden (1983) and, we felt, very appropriate for this species.

**Chough** *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* TO BECOME **Red-billed Chough**

3, 4.

**Jackdaw** *Corvus monedula* TO BECOME **Western Jackdaw**

3. We believed it helpful to indicate that *C. monedula* has a more westerly distribution than Daurian Jackdaw *C. dauuricus*. Western Jackdaw has already been used by Alden & Gooders (1981) and is more appropriate than Eurasian Jackdaw, the name recently adopted by the AOU (1985).

**Indian House Crow** *Corvus splendens* TO BECOME **House Crow**

4, 7. Already known by this name throughout its native range.

**Raven** *Corvus corax* TO BECOME **Common Raven**

3, 4, 5. This is the name adopted in North America (AOU 1983).

**Tristram's Grackle** *Onychognathus tristramii* TO BECOME **Tristram's Starling**

1. All other species of *Onychognathus* are known as Starling; on the other hand, the name Grackle is used for several New World species in the family Icteridae.

**Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* TO BECOME **Common Starling**

3, 4, 5. Although the AOU (1983) has adopted the name European Starling, we prefer Common Starling (used by Yarrell 1839 and King, Dickinson & Woodcock 1975), since this is the most widespread species in the family Sturnidae and the adjective European is inaccurate.

**Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus* TO BECOME **Eurasian Tree Sparrow**

4, 5. Unfortunately, the AOU (1983) refers to the New World species *Spizella arborea* as American Tree Sparrow, which implies a closer relationship to *P. montanus* than is thought to exist (different families, Emberizidae and Passeridae, respectively); yet the name Tree Sparrow (with no additional adjective) is long established in both areas. In recent literature, the very widespread *P. montanus* is increasingly referred to as Eurasian Tree Sparrow (e.g. King, Dickinson & Woodcock 1975), and this name has become so entrenched, particularly in English-language publications in the east of its range, that (despite our dislike of the word Eurasian in this context) we felt compelled to conform. It is to be hoped that the name

Winter Sparrow, coined by Alden (1983) for *Spizella arborea*, will catch on more widely. Unfortunately, our principle 1 is frequently violated in the cases of the New World warblers versus Old World warblers, as well as the New World sparrows and Old World sparrows. This major nomenclatural conflict remains to be resolved.

### **Golden Sparrow** *Passer luteus* TO BECOME **Sudan Golden Sparrow**

5. To distinguish *P. luteus* from Arabian Golden Sparrow *P. euchlorus*. We are proposing this name because it has already been used by Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1955); the name African Golden Sparrow may, however, be more appropriate, since the species occurs west to Mauritania.

### **Yellow-throated Sparrow** *Petronia xanthocollis* TO BECOME **Chestnut-shouldered Rock Sparrow**

2, 6. A name suggested by Voous (1977). The group name, Rock Sparrow, is useful to distinguish members of the genus *Petronia* from other sparrows. Hall & Moreau (1970) pointed out, however, that the four species which have a yellow spot on the breast are not associated with rocks, and Alden & Gooders (1981) advocated calling them all *Petronias*. The taxonomy and nomenclature of the group have been thoroughly confused over the years and we would suggest that Yellow-throated and Yellow-spotted be avoided as accepted names for any of the species; the former is inappropriate and the latter ambiguous.

### **Rock Sparrow** *Petronia petronia* TO BECOME **Streaked Rock Sparrow**

3.

### **Snowfinch** *Montifringilla nivalis* TO BECOME **White-winged Snowfinch**

4, 5. The name adopted by Alden (1983).

### **Senegal Firefinch** *Lagonosticta senegala* TO BECOME **Red-billed Firefinch**

4, 6. Despite its specific name, *L. senegala* is far from being the only firefinch occurring in Senegal, and the widely used name (e.g. Clancey 1980; Williams & Arlott 1980) Red-billed Firefinch is preferred.

### **Avadavat** *Amandava amandava* TO BECOME **Red Avadavat**

4, 5. To distinguish *A. amandava* from the Green Avadavat *A. formosa*.

### **Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs* TO BECOME **Common Chaffinch**

3, 4.

### **Serin** *Serinus serinus* TO BECOME **European Serin**

3, 4, 5.

### **Canary** *Serinus canaria* TO BECOME **Island Canary**

5. The name Common Canary has been adopted by the AOU (1983), but this is quite inappropriate for a species restricted to a few North Atlantic islands. The majority of the species in the genus occur on the mainland of Africa, so this name, adopted by Alden & Gooders (1981), draws attention to its outlying distribution.

### **Greenfinch** *Carduelis chloris* TO BECOME **Western Greenfinch**

5. In contrast to Oriental Greenfinch *C. sinica*.

### **Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis* TO BECOME **European Goldfinch**

4, 5. Already adopted by the AOU (1983).

### **Siskin** *Carduelis spinus* TO BECOME **Spruce Siskin**

5. The similar North American species, *C. pinus*, is known as Pine Siskin (AOU 1983) and this newly coined name is, we believe, equally appropriate and more euphonious than, for instance, Eurasian Siskin.

**Linnet** *Carduelis cannabina* TO BECOME **Brown Linnet**

5. Yarrell (1839) used Common Linnet, but Brown Linnet also has a long history of use, at least locally, within Britain.

**Redpoll** *Carduelis flammea* TO BECOME **Common Redpoll**

3, 4. This is the name adopted by the AOU (1983).

**Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra* TO BE SPLIT INTO TWO SPECIES

**Common Crossbill** *L. curvirostra*

**Scottish Crossbill** *L. scotica*

3. The split was adopted by *British Birds* in 1978 (71: 2) and by the BOU in 1980 (*Ibis* 122: 566). Common Crossbill is a long-established British name (e.g. Yarrell 1839) and is, we believe, more appropriate than Red Crossbill (e.g. AOU 1983), since that name seems to imply that other crossbills are not red; also the males of some races of *L. curvirostra* are not red.

**Scarlet Grosbeak** or **Common Rosefinch** or **Scarlet Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus* TO BECOME **Common Rosefinch**

4. *British Birds* retained the word Scarlet from this species' former British name of Scarlet Grosbeak when it adopted Scarlet Rosefinch (in 1967), but *C. erythrinus* is known throughout most of its breeding range as Common Rosefinch (the alternative to Scarlet Grosbeak, listed by the BOU, 1971), and we consider it appropriate to conform.

**Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* TO BECOME **Northern Bullfinch**

4, 5. The range of this species extends east to Japan, but is more northerly than those of the four other species in the genus *Pyrrhula*, and the name has already been adopted by Alden (1983). There would be a case for calling *P. pyrrhula* Common Bullfinch, on the grounds that the term Northern Bullfinch has been used in the past in Britain to signify Continental races of *P. pyrrhula*, which could result in confusion. We welcome opinions.

**Parula Warbler** or **Northern Parula** *Parula americana* TO BECOME **Northern Parula Warbler**

2. We appreciate that the Olive-backed Warbler *P. pitiayumi* was renamed Tropical Parula by the AOU and that, in the process, the names of both species were simplified, with the dropping of the word Warbler. This is a trend which has also occurred in Britain (e.g. Mandarin Duck becoming Mandarin), but it is one which we now wish to reverse. While not suggesting that, for instance, Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapillus* should become Ovenbird Warbler or American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla* become American Redstart Warbler, we do regard the dropping of a useful group name as a retrograde step. The problem of use of the word warbler for the Old World Sylviidae as well as for the New World Parulidae and the Australasian Acanthizidae still needs to be resolved.

**Myrtle Warbler** *Dendroica coronata* TO BECOME **Yellow-rumped Warbler**

4. Adopted by *British Birds* (71: 2) in 1978.

**Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas* TO BECOME **Common Yellowthroat**

4. Adopted by *British Birds* in 1984 to conform with AOU (1983) usage.

**Slate-coloured Junco** *Junco hyemalis* TO BECOME **Dark-eyed Junco**

4. Adopted by *British Birds* in 1984 to conform with AOU (1983) usage.

**Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana* TO REMAIN **Ortolan Bunting**

We wish to stem the trend towards abbreviating this name to Ortolan (cf. Marabou Stork).

**Pallas's Reed Bunting** *Emberiza pallasii* TO BECOME **Pallas's Bunting**

7. The simplification of this name avoids the requirement to add an adjective to the long-



established name Reed Bunting *E. schoeniclus*. The uniqueness of Reed Bunting can be further established by the adoption of the name Marsh Bunting for the Japanese *E. yessoensis*.

### **Baltimore Oriole** *Icterus galbula* TO BECOME **Northern Oriole**

4. Adopted by *British Birds* in 1978 (71: 2).

We feel that it is important to stress, once again, that the name changes listed here are those which the BOU Records Committee is proposing, for consideration by the world's birdwatchers and ornithologists who have an interest in such matters. Publication of this list is not intended to encourage the immediate adoption of these names, but merely to initiate discussion of them. We ask that constructive suggestions (reasons for objecting to a proposed name or proposals for an improvement to one) should be made in writing and sent (to arrive before 1st October 1989) to the Secretary, Records Committee, British Ornithologists' Union, c/o British Museum (Natural History), Sub-Department of Ornithology, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP.

A total of 351 possible changes to English names of birds on the Western Palearctic list was considered by the subcommittee appointed by the BOU Records Committee. In some cases, the subcommittee proposed that no change should be made; in other cases the subcommittee proposed a single name or sometimes two possible alternative names. At the time of this assessment, several members were retiring from the BOU Records Committee, and other members were joining it. All the possible name changes were voted upon by all the people named below. The most progressive member voted for over 300 name changes, but even the most conservative member voted in favour of 48 name changes. The proposals set out in this document show only those which were approved by a majority of the full membership of the Records Committee (by 'full' we mean not only those members who were ever-present, but also all incoming members and all outgoing members).

It has sometimes been argued that any attempt to standardise English names is doomed to failure because of a substantial level of disagreement over names between the various interested parties. There will probably always be minor cases where universal agreement is not possible, but, as a measure of our efforts to achieve a reasonable level of international standardisation of English names, we feel that the following comparative figures are worthy of note. The AOU list (1983) includes 369 species which also appear in *The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Currently, 66% of the English names are identical in both lists, but, if all our recommended changes are adopted, the correlation will improve to 77%. The RAOU list (1978) includes 132 species common to the *British Birds* list, and here the level of matching names would improve from 71% to 77%. King, Dickinson & Woodcock (1975) include 287 species common to the *British Birds* list, and here the correlation would improve from 60% to 79%. The region that has most extensive species overlap with the Western Palearctic is Africa, with over 550 species common to both areas. At the time of writing, only two volumes of *The Birds of Africa* have been published (Brown, Urban & Newman 1982; Urban, Fry & Keith 1986), but these

include 307 species that are also on the *British Birds* list; at present, 73% of the names correlate, but this would improve to 84% if all our recommendations were adopted.

We hope that no ornithologist or group of ornithologists will feel that we have deliberately ignored their published or circulated views, or are intending to try to impose names which are not acceptable to the ornithological community as a whole. We realise that much work on standardising names is occurring in many parts of the world, some of which has reached us subsequent to the long-winded voting procedures within our own committee, and some of which we may have accidentally overlooked. We hope that everyone who feels that we have come to a bad decision on any particular name will write to us, so that our formal proposals for name changes—which will be published in about 18 months' time—can take all such comments fully into account.

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# Juvenile Hen Harriers showing 'Marsh Hawk' characters

*J. P. Thorpe*



**A**dult Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* show marked sexual dimorphism, but juveniles of both sexes of the European and Asiatic subspecies *C. c. cyaneus* are generally considered to be very similar to, or practically indistinguishable from, the adult female (Witherby *et al.* 1943; Peterson *et al.* 1983; Cramp & Simmons 1980). In North America, the Hen Harrier is considered to belong to a different subspecies, *C. c. hudsonius*, and is known

as the Northern Harrier or 'Marsh Hawk'. Details of the precise differences between the two subspecies have been the subject of some dispute (e.g., Wallace 1971, 1972, 1974; Oreel 1974; Grant 1980, 1983), although it is generally agreed that, in almost all cases (but see van Kreuningen 1981), adult males can be readily differentiated. A major distinguishing character between the juveniles has been said to be the colour of the underparts, these being rufous and unstreaked on *hudsonius*, but paler brown and streaked on *cyaneus* (Wallace 1971; Cramp & Simmons 1980; Grant 1980, 1983); juvenile *hudsonius*, but not *cyaneus*, is also said to have dark head or neck markings, giving a hooded effect (Wallace 1971; Grant 1983).

Various sightings in Britain of juvenile Hen Harriers with apparently unstreaked rufous underparts (e.g. Wallace 1971; Grant 1983; Riddiford 1983) have led in some cases to claims that these were vagrants of the race *hudsonius*. The best-known of these is the much-discussed 'Cley Harrier' (Wallace 1971, 1974; Grant 1980, 1983), which was observed by many people at Cley, Norfolk, between October 1957 and April 1958. There is, however, some evidence that juveniles of the race *cyaneus* may occasionally have unstreaked rufous underparts (Wallace 1974; Grant 1980; van Kreuningen 1981), and this has cast a degree of doubt on even previously accepted records of the race *hudsonius* in Europe.

Against this background, some of my observations of Hen Harriers on the Isle of Man may provide a further insight into what Grant (1983) has termed 'the Marsh Hawk problem'.

### Observations on the Isle of Man

Hen Harriers have been seen fairly regularly on the Isle of Man for many years (Cullen & Jennings 1986). The species was first recorded nesting there in 1977 (McIntyre *et al.* 1978), since when the resident breeding population has increased to an estimated five or six pairs (Cullen & Jennings 1986). The particular harriers described below are the two offspring of a pair which I watched for long periods on several occasions during June and July 1981.

The nest site was at around 300 m above sea level in a remote and uninhabited area in the northern part of the island. I had seen adult Hen Harriers (probably the same pair) in the locality earlier in the year, but when I first visited the nesting area the two juveniles were fledged, although apparently only just able to fly (they could fly only for short distances just off the ground, and often fell over on landing). A few weeks later, when able to fly moderately well, both were still remarkably tame: not only were they reluctant to fly if approached (cautiously), but, when they did, they also landed very close to me a few times. Over various visits, I was able to observe them for considerable periods in excellent light and at very close range—sometimes so that the bird more or less occupied the complete field of view of my binoculars. The juvenile harriers moved around very little, generally perching almost motionless on a tussock for a few minutes to an hour or more and then flying to another tussock a few metres away. The adult female was rather less tame and more active, often circling for a few

minutes between long spells of sitting on the ground; the male rarely appeared, and I saw only one food pass to the female.

The female and, from what I saw of him, the male were both of 'normal' appearance for adult Hen Harriers. At the time, however, I was puzzled by the juveniles, which had uniform, unstreaked, deep chestnut (rufous-brown) underparts, and upperparts more rufous than those of the adult female; they had dark markings around the front and sides of the neck, like a broad collar, which merged upwards into dark cheek patches. Their neck feathers stood out slightly to give a ruff-like effect, and this, combined with the dark facial coloration, produced a hooded appearance. From diagrams of facial markings of various harrier species in Cramp & Simmons (1980: page 133), I concluded at the time that, had I not seen the parent harriers, I would have had to identify the juveniles as either Montagu's *C. pygargus* or Pallid Harriers *C. macrourus*, although they lacked the paler areas on face and neck of those species. I did not consider it likely that there was anything particularly unusual about the juveniles, but concluded that juvenile Hen Harriers were probably considerably more variable than suggested in the literature; I further concluded that perhaps the differences between juveniles and adult females were not always so marked, and also that they might have appeared so conspicuous only because I was able to get unusually close views.

## Discussion

When I recently read Grant's (1983) paper on possible British and other European records of the North American race *hudsonius*, it became clear that the juvenile Hen Harriers I had observed were not typical of the race *cyaneus*, but did show some of the features more commonly associated with juvenile *hudsonius*. Discounting the wild improbability that vagrant *hudsonius* had bred on the Isle of Man, it would appear that European Hen Harriers may, on occasion, produce juveniles confusingly similar to those of *hudsonius*. This could provide a possible alternative explanation for some of the claimed British sightings of 'Marsh Hawks', including perhaps the 'Cley Harrier'.

On several other occasions since 1981, I have seen Hen Harriers with a rufous appearance. Although I have not seen any well enough to be confident that their underparts were unstreaked, I have always assumed them to be juveniles similar to those described above (i.e. of the '*hudsonius* type'). This may or may not be the case, and, even if it is, on a comparatively small island with few Hen Harriers there would always be the risk of overestimating abundance through repeated sightings of the same one or two individuals. Such observations do, however, suggest the possibility that a proportion of juvenile Manx Hen Harriers may be of the '*hudsonius* type'. If so, given the probable genetic structure of the population, this is not entirely unexpected. The comparatively sudden appearance of a breeding population of Hen Harriers on the Isle of Man indicates that all the resident harriers may have arisen from the original single pair which first nested in 1977 (or at least suggests that the population originated from

very few individuals). The rapid expansion of such a small population would provide ideal conditions for a rare gene, if present in one of the (two?) original parents, to become common in the new population through the genetic phenomenon known as 'founder effect' (this causes distorted gene frequencies in new populations derived originally from very small numbers of individuals: see, e.g., Selander & Kaufman 1973). The plausibility of a 'hudsonius-type' juvenile Hen Harrier visiting the Isle of Man is increased by the sighting of such an individual in the Western Isles in 1973 (Grant 1983): it is likely that this bird (or perhaps a similar sibling), if migrating south, would have passed through the island. It may also be significant that a 1973 juvenile would have reached breeding age by 1977, the year that the species first nested on the island.

From the observation that both offspring of a pair of Hen Harriers of the race *cyaneus* were of the 'hudsonius type', it is possible to make some suggestions about the possible genes involved. First, since there was no evidence of Mendelian segregation between the various *hudsonius* characters (rufous coloration, lack of streaking, and facial markings), it is likely that these are all under the control of the same gene locus (in other words, one gene causes all the characters). The gene is obviously rare and, even in a partially inbred population, would probably be present only in the heterozygous form. A recessive gene would need to be present in both parents to be detectable in the offspring and, even then, the chances of its being visible in both of a brood of two would be only about 6%. A dominant gene would have a 25% chance of affecting both offspring if present in only one parent, and about 56% if present in both. It is likely, therefore, that all 'hudsonius-type' characters in juvenile Hen Harriers are controlled by a single dominant gene.

A further implication is that what is generally regarded as a major distinction between *hudsonius* and *cyaneus* may result merely from a single gene, which is rare in the latter, but found in most (all?) of the former: given that the difference between the adult males may also be caused by only one gene (producing partially darker coloration in *hudsonius*), the subspecific distinction between *cyaneus* and *hudsonius* could itself be regarded as doubtful. Another, perhaps unlikely, possibility is that the differences between males may be phenotypic rather than genotypic. Many mammal species possess genes which cause pale coloration with dark extremities (nose, ears, feet, tail etc.), for example Siamese cats; in some cases, the coloration is considerably affected by environmental temperature, and the extremities in particular become much darker if the moult occurs in cold weather. Similar genes exist in birds and, if the pale coloration of adult male Hen Harriers is of this type, then the dark extremities (flanks and crown) of male *hudsonius* could result from the generally much lower winter temperatures prevailing in most parts of North America, though, on the other hand, many *hudsonius* winter as far south as Panama. (Note that most adult male *cyaneus* have a nape patch and additional faint pigmentation on the otherwise white flanks (Cramp & Simmons 1980), and some, usually assumed to be younger birds, show extensive brown streaking on the belly). Temperature effects could also explain the claimed slightly larger size of



*hudsonius*, since, in most animal species, individuals from colder areas average somewhat larger than those from farther south.

Yet another possibility is that juvenile male Hen Harriers of the '*hudsonius* type' may develop 'Marsh Hawk'-like characters as adults. The occurrence in the Netherlands of an adult male, apparently indistinguishable from male *hudsonius*, in an area where several '*hudsonius*-type' juveniles were also seen (van Kreuningen 1981), would seem to provide some support for this suggestion. The lack of reports of similar adults from Britain and Ireland should not necessarily be taken as strong evidence against their occurrence, since '*hudsonius*-type' juveniles are fairly conspicuous (and much easier to observe than the higher-flying and much-faster-flying adult males), yet remarkably few have been reported. If such European juvenile males do become 'Marsh Hawks' as adults, this will indicate that probably only one gene causes all '*hudsonius*-type' characters in both juvenile and adult. If this is the case, the subspecific distinction probably depends on frequency differences for just this one gene and must surely, therefore, be considered extremely flimsy.

It may be concluded that '*hudsonius*-type' juveniles can occur among European Hen Harriers and probably result from only a very slight genetic difference from normal juvenile *cyaneus*. Clearly, really detailed observations and descriptions of Hen Harriers of all ages are needed, but particularly of fledged juveniles and parents at or close to the nest site, where species and age of each individual will normally be obvious. Observations away from the nest site, although interesting, will probably be less useful, since atypical individuals are the most difficult to identify; indeed, in a genus with several very similar species, chance sightings will give little clear evidence as to rarity or otherwise of a morph, because arguments are always likely to include a degree of circularity (juveniles with unstreaked underparts or dark facial patterns may be considered rarer than they are, as many will not be conclusively or correctly identified; similarly, adult males will be considered never to occur with significant ventral pigmentation, because all such birds will be identified as juveniles/immatures). Another clear need is for good descriptions of juvenile and adult *hudsonius* from North America, with particular regard to the characters considered to distinguish them from *cyaneus*.

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## Summary

Juvenile Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* of the Eurasian subspecies *C. c. cyaneus* are considered to be distinguishable from the North American *C. c. hudsonius* ('Northern Harrier' or 'Marsh Hawk') because the latter have unstreaked, rufous underparts and dark facial markings. Based upon such differences, claims have been made for sightings of vagrant juvenile *hudsonius* in Europe. Observations of two newly fledged juveniles on the Isle of Man indicate the occasional occurrence of '*hudsonius* type' offspring among *C. c. cyaneus*, and the '*hudsonius*-type' characters may be controlled by a single gene. It is suggested that some claimed sightings of possible juvenile *hudsonius* in the British Isles should be regarded with caution.



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# Identification of Siberian and other forms of Lesser Whitethroat

*Kevin Baker*



**R**eports of the central Asian (Siberian) race of Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca blythi* have increased in Britain and Ireland over the past decade or so. The reasons for this are unclear, but the trend follows the increased westward vagrancy of other Siberian passerines, which have now become a regular feature of late autumn (Baker 1977; Elkins 1983;

**Table 1. Selected records of 'Siberian Lesser Whitethroat' *Sylvia curruca blythi* in Britain**  
All reports concern singles unless otherwise stated. This list is the result of an extensive, but not exhaustive, literature search

County	Records
Shetland	Fair Isle, 5th and 27th September 1964, 26th September 1965, 17th and 30th September 1968.
Northumberland	Hauxley, 3rd October 1964 (two), 3rd November 1968, 19th October 1972, 21st October 1978, 8th November 1981; Craster, 20th October 1968; Holy Island, 12th October 1980.
Humberside	Spurn, 29th October 1948, 9th October 1949, 26th September 1965, 7th October 1966, 28th October 1971, 19th October 1972, 23rd October 1981, 11th and 12th October 1982; Flamborough, 8th October 1977, 1st October 1978, 10th and 16th October 1982.
North Yorkshire	Scarborough, 19th October 1975.
Lincolnshire	Saltfleet (two) and Theddlethorpe, 18th October 1981; Anderby, 20th and 25th October 1981; Donna Nook, 14th November 1981.
Norfolk	Sheringham, 16th September 1976, 12th October 1980; Wells, 12th October 1980; Welney (feeding on bird-table), 11th December to 14th January 1980.
Kent	Sandwich Bay, 21st October, (possibly another) 1st November 1985; Dungeness, 4th, 5th and 6th October 1986.

Howey & Bell 1985). It is likely, however, that many *blythi* go unreported each year since observers are unaware of or disinterested in racial differences or identification. Indeed, it is rare for county recorders even to mention positively identified subspecies, making it impossible to be confident that any list of records of 'Siberian Lesser Whitethroats' for past years is comprehensive. Some information does, however, exist (table 1). All have been on the British east coast, from Shetland to Kent, and most have occurred in late October or early November.

While examining the status of *blythi*, it is as well to consider other races of Lesser Whitethroat too. Although there are no confirmed records of races other than *curruca* and *blythi* in Britain and Ireland, reports of 'aberrant' Lesser Whitethroats are worryingly frequent. Some of these descriptions strongly suggest 'Hume's Lesser Whitethroat' *S. c. althaea* (Collins *in litt.*) or 'Desert Lesser Whitethroat' *S. c. minula* (Mather 1986). These races, in particular, are strong candidates for future inclusion on the British and Irish list.

The aim of this paper is to draw the attention of field workers to the principal differences between the races of Lesser Whitethroat, and to give some indication of their complex breeding distributions. While the inclusion of wing-formulae and measurements are unlikely to help in the field, ringers will benefit, since there are small differences in structure between races.

## Taxonomy

The systematics of this group is confusing, and a review of the taxonomic status of the various forms is needed. The main controversy concerns *S. c. minula* and *S. c. althaea*: some authors (e.g. Vaurie 1959; Harrison 1982) regard them as distinct species, each with several races, whereas others

(e.g. Williamson 1968; Voous 1977) have lumped them under Lesser Whitethroat. In a recent study of *althaea*, however, Stepanyan (1982) stated 'spatial, reproductive, morphological and ecological relations between these forms has shown there exists a break of interspecific type between them': overwhelming evidence to suggest that at least this form should be given specific status. Peters (1986), interestingly, has grouped *blythi* with *curruca*, on the grounds that no morphological differences were found between it and the nominate race. In this review, I have followed Williamson (1968), whose treatment of the numerous races thus far described is of a particularly practical nature, keeping the number to a minimum.

The subspecies under consideration inhabit three broadly different ecosystems: lowland grassy and forest-zone areas (*curruca* and *blythi*); mountainous wooded slopes (*althaea*); and arid, desert regions (*minula* and *margelanica*). There are, however, breeding grounds where, apparently, all three ecotypes overlap (Turkey, Iran and Turkestan), and where interbreeding between forms appears to be frequent; there are thus some populations which will prove impossible to define racially. In addition, Lesser Whitethroat, as a species, shows highly variable plumage characteristics, even in zones where a race is pure. This, too, can make racial determination difficult, and sometimes impossible. In addition to the five forms already mentioned, the following races have also been described, but may best be merged with the main races as follows: *S. c. caucasica* (Caucasus, Iran) in the nominate race; *S. c. telengitica* (Southwest Altai, Central Asia, wintering in Northern India), *S. c. halimondendri* (Kazakhstan, South Central Asia, wintering in Northern India) and *S. c. snigirewskii* (East Turkmenistan) in *S. c. blythi*; and *S. c. monticola* (South Russia, Turkestan) and *S. c. zagrossiensis* (Iraq, Southwest Iran) in *S. c. althaea* (Vaurie 1959; Howard & Moore 1984).

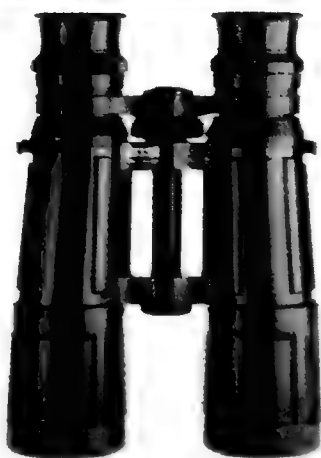
## Identification

The identification of *blythi* is based on its usually somewhat warmer brown upperparts and whiter breast and belly, giving the impression of a paler and buffer version of *curruca*. This distinctive tone is best seen in autumn, when both adult and first-winter Lesser Whitethroats are in fresh plumage. The degree of 'warmth' on the brown upperparts varies individually and seasonally. In the most obvious form, the mantle and back are buff-brown, contrasting with the grey head, while the tertials can appear almost gingery. The colouring is, in fact, more reminiscent of Whitethroat *S. communis* than of typical Lesser Whitethroat. In worn winter plumage or on dull individuals, however, the tones may be very similar to those of *curruca*. Though the upperparts generally remain slightly paler and warmer, the difference is difficult to see, even in extensive skin collections. In fresh and bright plumage, the above characteristics should help to distinguish *blythi* from *curruca*, but may not help for two other south Eurasian races: *minula* and *margelanica*. The former is a desert race and is smaller than *curruca* and *blythi*. It is strikingly pale

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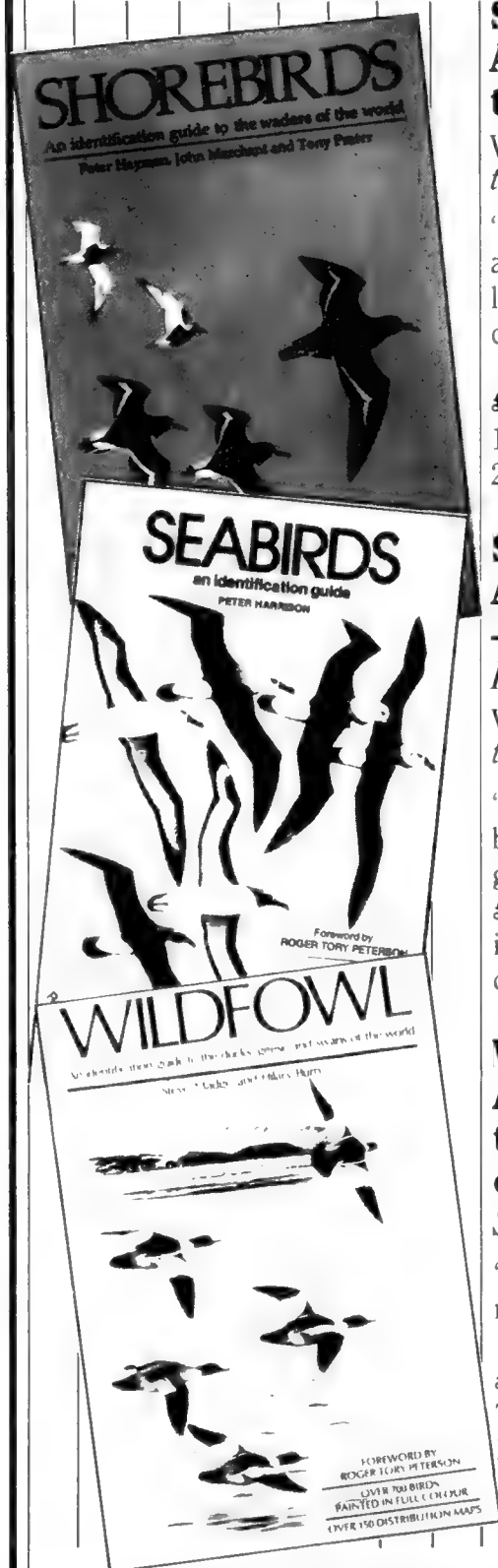
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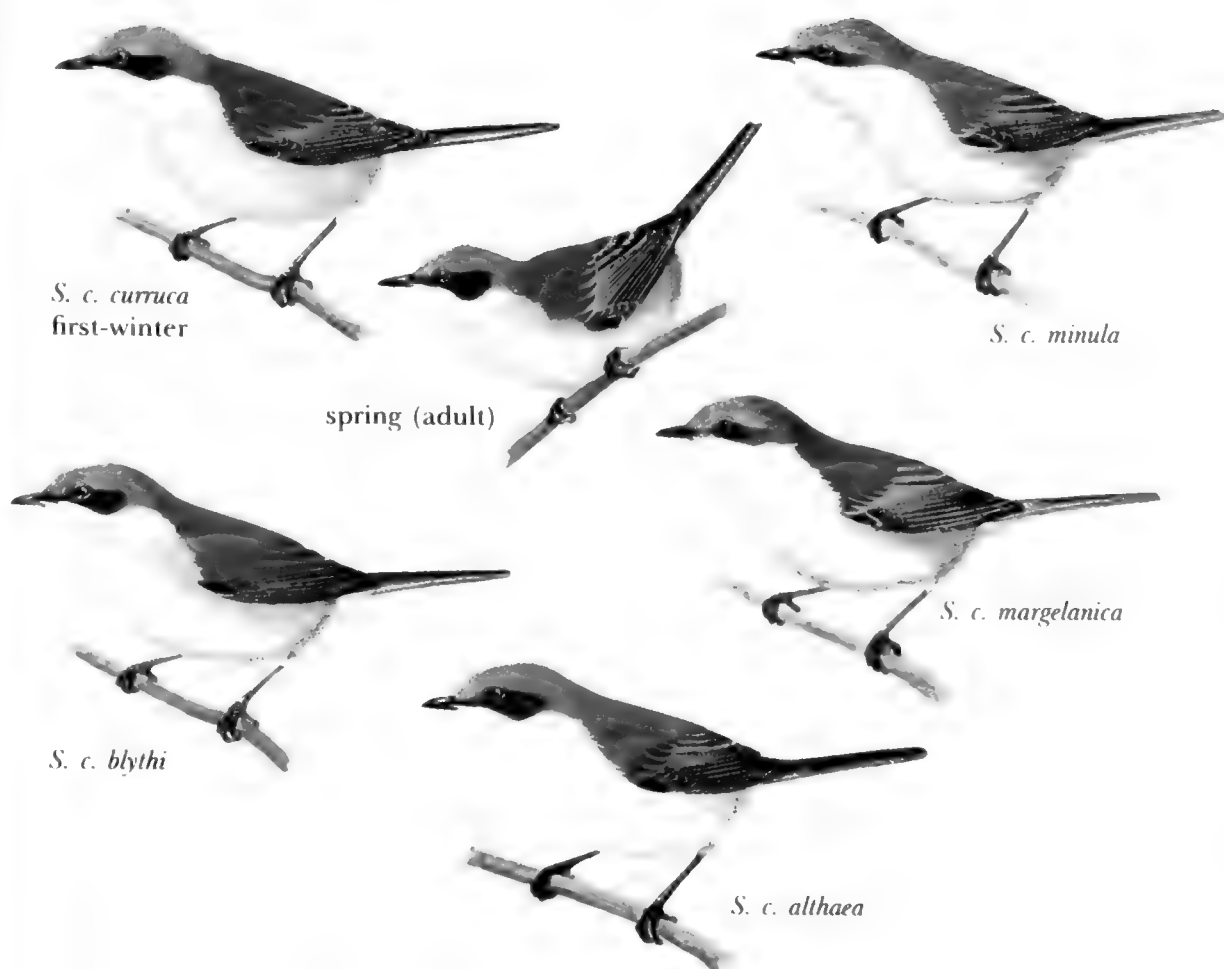


Fig. 1. Races of Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

and sandy, slimmer-looking, and with a proportionately smaller head. The lores and ear-coverts appear darker as a direct result of the contrast with the rest of the dull greyish head, sandy mantle and whitish throat. On some individuals, however, the dark mask may be reduced or even absent, especially in worn plumage. Large individuals of the Far Eastern race, *margelanica* (which can also be small), could easily be confused with *blythi*. It is generally sandier on the upperparts, resembling *minula* (with which it intergrades), and has greyish uppertail-coverts. The race *althaea* is found on sparsely wooded slopes in mountainous or hilly country. It is fairly distinctive, appearing much bulkier than other forms, with a tit-like bill and, in fresh plumage, very dark upperparts. It is generally one of the easiest races to identify (Wallace 1973), but those in worn plumage (or smaller-than-average individuals) could be confused with the nominate race. Williamson (1968) drew attention to the strong demarcation of black in the purer white outer tail feathers of *minula*, *margelanica* and *althaea*, as opposed to the dusky-white outer tail feathers of *blythi* and *curruca*. This character should, however, be used with caution, since it could also be related to age. The nominate race, for instance, can have two-thirds of the outermost tail feather pure white (Svensson 1984). The easternmost races do, however, generally have more white in their tails than *curruca* or *blythi*.



Fig. 2. Breeding distribution of races of Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*: (1) *curruca*; (2) *blythi*; (3) *minula*; (4) *margelanica*; (5) *althaea*

### *S. c. curruca*

**PLUMAGE** In autumn (fresh plumage), upperparts brownish slate-grey, merging into grey crown; lores and ear-coverts dark brown or blackish, contrasting sharply with white throat and, to lesser extent, slate-grey crown, giving masked appearance. Primaries and outer secondaries dark brown, with narrow pale brown fringes on outer webs; inner secondaries and tertials have pale grey outer webs with whitish-grey fringes forming pale wing panel. Large alula feathers brownish-black, contrasting with outer wing-coverts. Tail dark brown, with pale grey inner and outer fringes. Inner web of outermost tail feathers dirty-white (first-

winter) to white (adult), with variable amounts of diffuse grey or brown on inner part of inner web. Underparts smoky-grey, with pinkish-buff suffusion on breast and flanks.

In spring/summer (worn plumage), underparts lack pinkish hue. Upperparts less brown, greyer and paler. Fringes to primaries, secondaries and tertials much reduced.

**BARE PARTS** Bill dark brown to almost black; lower mandible often paler at base. Legs slaty bluish-black. Iris brown with whitish crescent over pupil (adult) or uniform medium-grey tone (first-year).

**FIELD CHARACTERS AND HABITAT** Skulking and retiring; frequents thick cover in variety of habitats: tall scrub and small trees, often on edge of open space in coniferous, mixed or broadleaved forests; or young plantations with shrubbery or overgrown hedges; at higher altitudes, found in shrubby growth. In winter, frequents acacia scrub and palm groves of arid regions and tall scrub of semi-desert.

**VOICE** Song may begin with quiet, delicate musical warble, sometimes inaudible except at very close range, followed by penetrating, rattling, repeated 'Chikka-chikka-chikka . . .' or 'Chicker-chicker-chicker'. Subsong is low, quiet warble like that associated with rattle, delivered chiefly in April and September. Call is typical of *Sylvia*: 'Tak' or 'Tchack'. Alarm note is 'Chaar' or 'Chuur'.

**DISTRIBUTION** (see map for breeding) Winters mainly east of the Nile in northeastern Africa, south to Ethiopia and west to Chad and northern Nigeria.

*S. c. blythi*

PLUMAGE In autumn (fresh plumage), as nominate *curruca* except upperparts warmer brown, particularly evident on tertials, which sometimes appear almost gingery. Underparts whiter, while flanks and thighs with more sandy-buff suffusion, lacking pinkish tinge of *curruca*. In late winter and

spring, upperparts less brown, as dull as those of *curruca*, making distinction very difficult.

BARE PARTS As *curruca*.

FIELD CHARACTERS AND HABITAT Told from *curruca* by whiter underparts and buff (not pinkish) flanks; tertial fringes more gingery than *curruca*, recalling Whitethroat, but paler. Chief breeding habitat ranges from thickets of asparagus in southern USSR to undergrowth in forests of fir *Abies* and aspen *Populus* farther west. On steppes and mountain slopes (up to 2,000 m), found in thickets and shrubbery or underbrush in forests.

VOICE Song structure similar to *curruca*, but often precedes main rattle with quick, vibrant short 'Chu-chu-chu'. Tone of rattle recalls weak 'Teacher-teacher-teacher' of Great Tit *Parus major*, with rattling quality; difference, however, is slight (and may vary regionally). Determining such small differences in song tone requires thorough familiarity with one or other of the races.

DISTRIBUTION (see map for breeding) Winters southeastern Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India (chiefly in northwest, but east to West Bengal and south throughout peninsular plains to Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka), and northern Sri Lanka.

*S. c. minula*

PLUMAGE In late autumn (fresh plumage), upperparts significantly sandier brown than those of all other races, with possible exception of *margelanica*, and with noticeably dull grey head. Mask restricted to lores and fore ear-coverts and can appear comparatively dark owing to contrast with paler surrounding area. On some, however, mask may be reduced or even absent, especially in worn plumage. Well-developed pale grey or whitish streak or spot just over and behind eye on many individuals of this race. Underparts sandy white, with buffish flanks. Dark areas on tail distinctly paler than on *curruca*, being pale grey-brown. On worn adults in summer, sandy-brown upperparts become

paler. Plumage of this desert-dwelling race prone to sun-bleaching; in extreme cases, this leads to very worn and abraded feathers (especially in tail and outer primaries), and upperparts may take on pale yellow-ochre tone. Since this race intergrades with both *blythi* and *margelanica*, intermediates occur, and caution should be exercised in areas of sympatry.

BARE PARTS Bill dark bluish-grey, with paler base to lower mandible. Legs dark brown to slate-grey. Iris pale yellow (may vary with age).

FIELD CHARACTERS AND HABITAT A small, short-tailed pale warbler with fine bill: resembles Spectacled *S. conspicillata* or Desert Warbler *S. nana*, rather than nominate Lesser Whitethroat. Slimmer and smaller-headed than nominate race; with plumage described as appearing 'washed-out' (Wallace 1973). Inhabits scant scrub and bush cover in desert or semi-desert areas; also cultivated areas such as orchards and gardens.

VOICE Song is pleasant and varied warble without terminal rattle of *curruca*. Call most commonly employed is harsh 'Ch'churrr-churrr' or 'Chee-chee-chee'. Harsh 'Tittitic' and loud staccato buzzing 'Tz-tz-tz-tz, tre-ter-zz-zz-zz' also recorded. Some individuals also scold like *curruca* (Gallagher & Woodcock 1980; Hollom *et al.* 1988; S. C. Madge *in litt.*).

DISTRIBUTION (see map for breeding) Winters in eastern Saudi Arabia and southern Arabia to southeastern Iran, eastwards to central India.

*S. c. margelanica*

PLUMAGE General appearance pale and sandy-brown, resembling *minula*, except

sandy-white underparts have buffish-pink suffusion on flanks in fresh plumage (less

obvious or absent when worn) and is darker and with more pronounced demarcation between brown and white on inner web of outer tail feather. Uppertail-coverts grey, unlike *minula*, which has uniform sandy-brown mantle, rump and uppertail-coverts. The races *margelanica* and *minula* intergrade,

so only well-marked individuals can be racially determined.

--

BARE PARTS Bill dark brown, with greyish base to lower mandible. Legs dark slate-grey or brown. Iris grey.

FIELD CHARACTERS AND HABITAT Similar to *minula*, but appears bulkier and larger, with longer tail; head bigger, giving bull-necked appearance.

VOICE No information.

DISTRIBUTION (see map for breeding) Thought to winter in much the same area as *minula*.

### *S. c. althaea*

PLUMAGE In autumn (fresh plumage), upperparts bluish-grey or dark slate-grey merging into greyish-black crown. Mask less clearly defined than on typical *curruca* owing to darker crown. Pale edges to inner secondaries and tertials giving sharply contrasting pale wing panel. Underparts smoky grey as on *curruca*, but usually with stronger pinkish suffusion on breast and flanks. Tail somewhat darker than that of *curruca*, with variable dusky-brown in white outer tail feather on some individuals (possibly first-years); pure white on others (possibly adults). Less

well-marked individuals resemble nominate race and may not be separable. In spring/summer (worn plumage), upperparts become paler, greyish-brown, while pale edges to secondaries and tertials become reduced, making wing panel less obvious. Pinkish hue on underparts subdued or absent. This race intergrades with *curruca*.

BARE PARTS Bill almost black, with pale base to lower mandible. Legs grey to almost black. Iris dark brown (possibly first-years) to pale greyish-yellow (possibly adults).

FIELD CHARACTERS AND HABITAT Darker and slightly bulkier than *curruca*; difference in colour between upperparts and head less obvious than on *curruca*. Dark mask also less obvious, tending to merge with darker crown. Pale edgings to inner secondaries and tertials form obvious wing panel (in fresh plumage). Underparts similar to those of *curruca*, but sometimes with stronger suffusion on flanks and thighs (in fresh plumage). Bill deeper than on *curruca*, rather like that of tit *Parus*. Favoured habitats are broadleaved woods on mountain slopes, tall subalpine shrubbery and sparse shrub growth on steep slopes up to 3,600 m.

S. C. Madge (*in litt.*) states that, in worn plumage, the central Asian race of Whitethroat *S. communis icterops* is very grey and has virtually no rufous in the wings, and is thus very difficult to separate from *althaea*, being best distinguished by its pale legs and pale bill base.

VOICE Song is brief, but clear ringing warble, 'Tru-tru, tru-ee, tru-eee', not unlike that of Blackcap *S. atricapilla* in quality, and quite unlike that of other races of Lesser Whitethroat (Wallace 1973). Calls include melodious 'Wheet-wheet-wheet' and scolding 'Churr'.

DISTRIBUTION (see map for breeding) Winters in parts of Pakistan, and throughout India and Sri Lanka, on lower hill slopes, mainly in acacia scrub.

## Conclusions

Given adequate views and good field conditions, well-marked individuals of the Siberian race of Lesser Whitethroat, *blythi*, show distinctive plumage characteristics in fresh plumage, which should generally distinguish them from the nominate race in the autumn and early winter. Worn individuals, however (from winter to summer), may show similar plumage tones to *curruca*; only those showing strong *blythi* markings can be safely identified during this period. There are small areas where *blythi* and *curruca* intergrade.

Two southeastern races, *minula* and *althaea*, may be separate species;

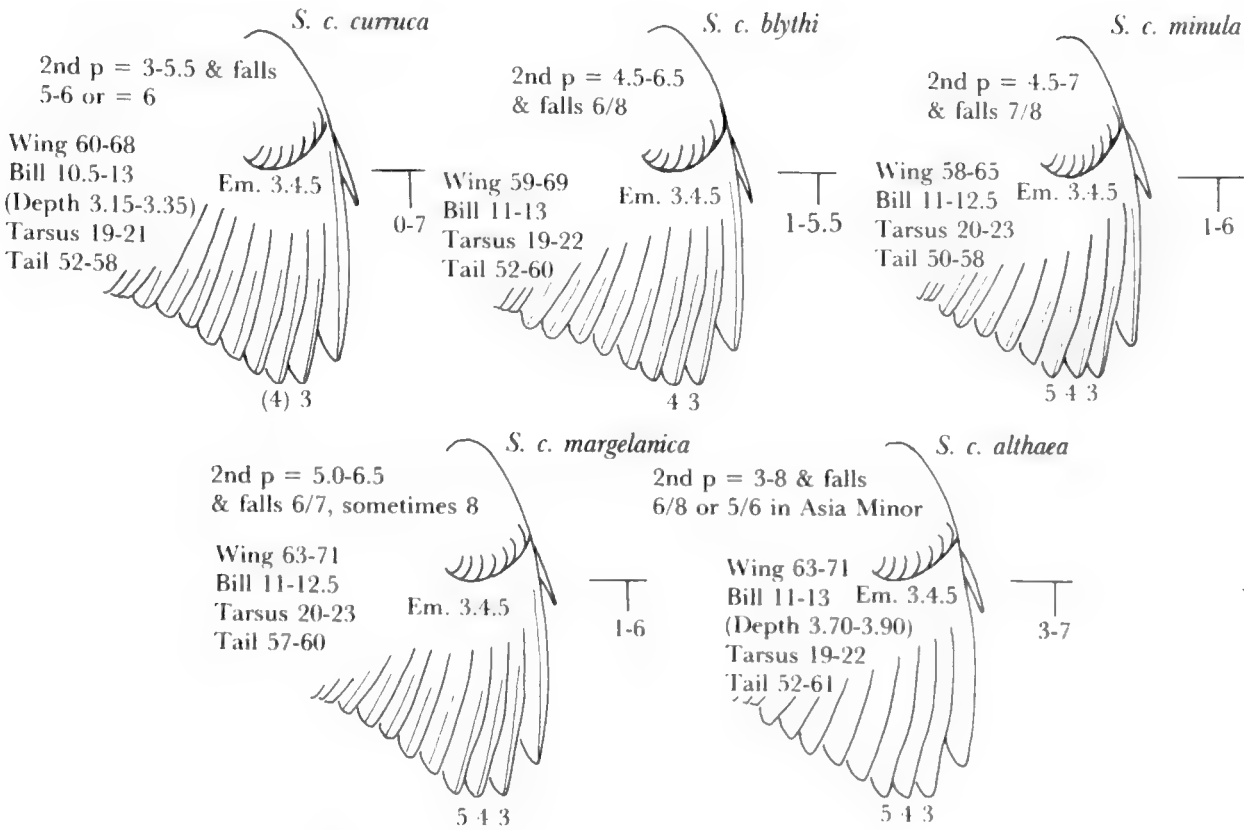


Fig. 3. Wing-formulae of five races of Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

more research is required. The Desert Lesser Whitethroat, *minula*, is distinctive in all plumages, and should easily be told apart from *curruca*. The easternmost populations intergrade with *margelanica*, while in parts of Iran and Turkestan there is interbreeding with *blythi*. Hume's Lesser Whitethroat, *althaea*, in its typical form, may be separable from the nominate race. Intergradation, however, is particularly frequent in the areas where this race breeds (mostly with *curruca*, but other forms may be involved). Confusion may arise in some areas of central Asia with the eastern form of Whitethroat, *S. communis icterops*, which is very grey and shows little or no rufous in the wings.

The little-studied Chinese race *margelanica* is a pale form, resembling *minula* in tone. The geographical divide between this and the nominate race is great, and direct comparisons make identification comparatively straightforward. Problems arise in localities where *margelanica* overlaps with *minula*; intergradation occurs, making discrimination impossible.

### Acknowledgments

Various people provided useful information and helpful comments on Lesser Whitethroats: Tim Inskipp, Peter Grant, Lars Jonsson, Séan McMinn, Tim Collins, Dr Moss Taylor, John Mather, Nigel Odin and Richard Porter. I also wish to thank Tim Inskipp, Peter Grant, Steve Madge and Alan Dean for commenting on an earlier draft of this paper. I am grateful for the privilege of being allowed to examine the skin collection at the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), Tring.

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## Mystery photographs

**134** Good grief, what a bill! This, or an analagous expletive, may well be heard when the bird is first seen. The most distinct feature is the long, fairly heavy, decurved bill. Obviously it is a *Numenius* (curlew or whimbrel). There are eight species in the genus, but, because it has a plain head and long bill, all but four are ruled out. These are the



Slender-billed Curlew *N. tenuirostris*, Curlew *N. arquata*, Far Eastern Curlew *N. madagascariensis* and Long-billed Curlew *N. americanus*. Of these, the first has a relatively short, fine bill, is very white below and does not give this heavy appearance (see *Brit. Birds* 77: 135-140, 581-586).

The other three species pose greater difficulties (in black-and-white) as their bill lengths and body sizes overlap considerably. We are left with few clues which might lead one to think, correctly, that it is a Far Eastern Curlew; it would be an overconfident observer who was adamant about this identification. The bird has a combination of a distinctly long, heavy-looking bill, a darkish wash spreading over the visible underparts, and moderately sized streaks on the flanks. This individual was photographed by David Tomlinson in January in Queensland, Australia. In Southeast Asia, it can occur alongside the paler, eastern race of the Curlew *N. a. orientalis*. Given a good view on the ground, they are relatively easily separated by the Far Eastern's pale brown wash on the underparts spreading well onto the lower belly (unlike the white background colour of *orientalis*), and often an extremely bland looking 'face', with little sign of supercilium or loreal patch. All problems would disappear instantly if the bird flew, as the very densely dark-barred underwing and the dark rump of Far Eastern would be obvious and very different from the mainly white underwing and lower back/upper rump of both races of Curlew.

The Long-billed Curlew of North America is rather different from the two Palearctic curlews in its deep cinnamon, very lightly marked underparts and virtually unmarked cinnamon wing-linings. Its bill can be even longer than the Far Eastern's, but it is usually finer. In a flock of

193. Far Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*, Australia, January 1986 (David Tomlinson)







194. Male Curlew *Numenius arquata*, Gwynedd, August 1978 (R. J. Chandler)

195. Female Curlew *Numenius arquata*, Cumbria, May 1959 (J. B. & S. Bottomley)



other curlews and with its bill tucked away, it can still be picked out by the characteristic mantle and scapulars, the feathers of which are very dark, with small contrasting pale spots, giving a flecked, not streaked appearance.

The Far Eastern Curlew breeds in northeastern Asia and winters from Borneo to New Zealand. There are indications that it has become much less common in southeastern Australia over the last 50 years, but more frequent in New Zealand. To date, it has shown few signs of vagrancy, although there is a recent record from Afghanistan, and a few turn up in Alaska.

TONY PRATER



196. Mystery photograph 135. Identify the species. Answer next month

## Notes



**Teal with abnormal 'face' pattern** On 10th January 1987, at the Hayle Estuary, Cornwall, Steve Cox, Tim Toohig and I watched a female Teal *Anas crecca* with an abnormal 'face' pattern. The individual showed very dark brown eye-stripes in front of and behind the eyes; well-defined, long

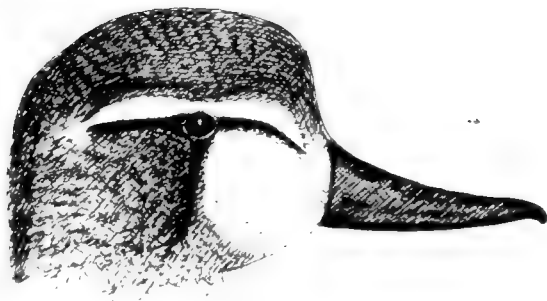


Fig. 1. Female Teal *Anas crecca* showing abnormal 'face' pattern, Cornwall, January 1987  
(Peter H. Aley)

whitish supercilia; and large ill-defined brownish-white areas extending from just below the eyes to the bill base. The remainder of the head was dull medium-brown, darkest on the crown. In addition, on one side only, a conspicuous, very dark brown vertical bar extended from just below the eye (see fig. 1).

Although I have noted female (or immature) Teals with a variety of different head patterns, none has been as striking as the Hayle bird, and I can find no reference in the literature to any similar individual. Given distant or obscured views, such a bird might be confused with Baikal Teal *A. formosa*, which can exhibit a similar face pattern (*Brit. Birds* 74: 321-326). The one at Hayle, however, differed in no other way—in plumage or structure—from the accompanying female Teals. This occurrence, therefore, emphasises the need to obtain views of supporting features when confronted by a Teal showing an odd face pattern.

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**Head-shaking of Garganey and Teal while feeding** Between 1983 and 1985, at Cropston Reservoir and Rutland Water, Leicestershire, I have watched both Garganeys *Anas querquedula* and Teals *A. crecca* feeding. All the Garganeys were individuals in eclipse or juvenile plumage (between 14th August and 10th September); about ten were watched at close range for some length of time, up to three were seen together, and several individuals were seen on more than one date. All showed a feeding action different from that of the Teals, which on all occasions were feeding alongside. The majority of Garganeys dabbled in typical fashion, and, when bringing their head out of the water, usually shook it from side to side in a deliberate flowing manner. Teals frequently shook their head, although usually not with any regularity (to my eyes, it seemed an action in irritation rather than as part of a natural feeding action). Only once did I observe Garganeys up-ending, when, on 28th August 1985, two were alongside several Teals on Rutland Water. Both species were feeding by up-ending: the Teals appeared to head-shake more than when dabbling, and the Garganeys performed this action with less regularity than when dabbling but with more consistency and with more of a flowing movement than the Teals. I have not been able to identify the food being taken by the two species; it may be that, even though they fed side by side, they were taking different foods and that the differing actions were due to this. Both others and myself have

found that the differing actions have made the initial locating of Garganeys among a party of Teals easier than it would have been using solely shape and markings.

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This note was originally published in the December 1987 issue (*Brit. Birds* 80: 626), but accidental omission of part of the text changed its meaning completely. We apologise to the author and to our readers for this error. The entire note is, therefore, printed here in full. EDS

**Kestrel taking Leach's Petrel** On 18th October 1983, at Seaforth, Merseyside, we saw a female Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* suddenly appear, scattering a small group of Leach's Petrels *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*, one of which it took from about 15 cm above the waves. The Kestrel then towered almost out of sight with the petrel in its talons.

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and J. TAYLOR

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**Merlin preying on Leach's Petrel** On 21st October 1986, whilst seawatching in a force 4 wind, at South Walney Nature Reserve, Cumbria, Peter Zaltowski and I saw an immature Merlin *Falco columbarius* with prey labour towards us from approximately 1 km out to sea. The Merlin landed on shingle 100 m distant and started to tear at the head of its prey, a Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. After feeding for 30 minutes, the Merlin departed; only the wings, legs and upper mandible of the victim were left. I have been unable to find any reference to Merlins preying on Leach's Petrels.

TIM DEAN

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**Peregrine taking Leach's Petrels** On 9th September 1984, off Cow Harbour, Calf of Man, P. Howlett and I saw a Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* attack several Leach's Petrels *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. On one occasion, the raptor caught a petrel and carried it back to its cliff perch on the Isle of Man. On another two occasions, a Peregrine, after a sortie over the sea, was seen flying back to its cliff perch with small black birds thought to be Leach's Petrels, and on a fourth occasion the falcon attacked and narrowly missed a Leach's Petrel not more than 200 m from us. Similar incidents, involving a total of one Leach's and three unidentified petrels, occurred on 21st and 22nd September and on 20th October. On each occasion, the same Peregrine was thought to be concerned. Dr D. Ratcliffe (1980, *The Peregrine Falcon*) recorded a large variety of prey species taken by Peregrines, including Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*, but not Leach's Petrel.

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**Pale trailing edge to secondaries of Baillon's Crake** During May 1985, at Beidaihe, northeast China, D. N. Bakewell and I saw 80 migrant Baillon's Crakes *Porzana pusilla*. At least nine of these, probably



Fig. 1. Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* showing pale trailing edge to secondaries (D. N. Bakewell)

more, showed a whitish trailing edge to the secondaries in flight, which, on some, was rather prominent, extending across the whole visible area of the secondaries. It was never so clear cut as on, for example, Redshank *Tringa totanus*, but was more of a diffuse border, and much less obvious (fig. 1). The unexpectedness of this feature, however, caused the first individual seen in flight to be mistakenly identified as Asian Yellow Rail *Coturnicops noveboracensis* (it was only when a definite Asian Yellow Rail was seen that the true brightness and extent of the white on the secondaries of that species was appreciated).

This feature is not expressly mentioned in the literature on Baillon's Crake, and may be peculiar to the nominate race (which occurs from southern Russia east to Japan and south to Iran, northern India and south China), although it may have gone unnoticed on the race *intermedia* (which occurs in Europe and north Africa), owing to the infrequency with which good flight views of Baillon's Crake are obtained. I can find no reference to a white trailing edge being present on the wing of Little Crake *P. parva*, so it may be a further separation feature for some individuals of Baillon's Crake.

My thanks are due to D. N. Bakewell for supplying the accompanying sketch and supporting these observations.

GEOFF CAREY

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Barry Taylor, who, with Peter Becker, is currently preparing a paper for *British Birds* on the identification of West Palearctic crakes, has commented as follows: 'I have noted a pale trailing edge to the wings of both Baillon's and Little Crakes in the field, but not to the extent implied in this note. I cannot find any skin of Baillon's among the 300+ skins in the British Museum (Natural History), Tring, which shows such a markedly white secondaries area. Almost all Baillon's have narrow paler fringes to the secondary tips, and probably 90% have pale fringes to the primary tips, often less noticeably so than on the secondaries. The pale colour varies in extent and tone, from only slightly paler brown and indistinct in some birds to buff or whitish-buff and thus more prominent in others—in such birds it is well visible from some angles in flight. Some birds (both sexes, all ages) also have a white terminal or subterminal spot on either the inner or all the secondaries; some may even show this character on primaries as well; some also have white spots along the webs of the secondaries. Pale spots also contribute to the prominence of a pale trailing edge in flight. The pale tips to the remiges do not disappear with wear in many individuals; they may become less distinct as feather tips become abraded, but they may also become more extensive and prominent with bleaching of the distal portion of the remiges. Some individuals may have paler secondaries than primaries (greyer- or buffer-tinted), this giving an even paler appearance to the rear edge of the inner wing.

'There is no apparent difference in the character between the races *pusilla*, *intermedia* and *obscura*, on the basis of an examination of over 250 skins (some from China) at the BMNH, Tring. The character is also present in Little Crake, many of which show it to a similar extent (again, I have noted it in the field). If this plumage detail is noted, then other distinctions between Baillon's and Little Crakes should be easily visible. Although not overtly mentioned in the text, the pale trailing edge on Baillon's is clearly shown in *BWP* 2 (p. 565).' Eds

**Waders eating fish—and chips** On 5th December 1981 and 10th and 19th January 1982, during severe weather, I visited Scarborough Harbour, North Yorkshire. Concentrations of waders were feeding on and around the fish-market pier on the trimmings left over from fish-filleting. These were mainly pieces of white-fish species, dogfish and rays. On 19th January, a Dunlin *Calidris alpina* was tearing flesh from the remains of a thornback ray *Raja clavata* weighing at least 1 kg. The waders included up to 28 Turnstones *Arenaria interpres*, two Redshanks *Tringa totanus*, at least 20 Dunlins and three Purple Sandpipers *C. maritima*. The pier was very busy with fishing activities and the waders were frequently disturbed, but they returned constantly to the pier and the dustbins of fish scraps. Turnstones also cleaned out mussel shells *Mytilus edulis* which contained fragments of tissue (the mussels had been extracted for use as line baits).

On 5th December, three Purple Sandpipers were feeding on fish scraps on the pier when a passer-by dropped a bag of potato chips. The sandpipers immediately began to eat these, perforating each chip along its long axis and eating the soft interior. So intent were the waders that, although they were disturbed many times during the period, they returned to the chips within seconds. I can find no similar observations on opportunistic feeding by Purple Sandpipers. The Turnstone's diet includes a wide range of 'eccentric' items, but on this occasion this species did not indulge in chip-eating.

MICHAEL CLEGG

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**Common Gulls feeding on cherries** During the first two weeks of August 1984, at Drumnadrochit, Inverness-shire, a flock of about 30 Common Gulls *Larus canus* rested for much of each day on the school playing-field or on the adjacent shinty pitch. Between the two fields were four cherry trees *Prunus* laden with a heavy crop. These attracted Song Thrushes *Turdus philomelos*, Blackbirds *T. merula* and Rooks *Corvus frugilegus*, which fed in the foliage, and also many local children, who tried to knock the fruit off the trees. The net result was large numbers of cherries littering the ground beneath the trees, and it was on these that the gulls fed.

Although the Common Gull flock contained on average only 37% juveniles (17 adults and ten juveniles, based on five counts), 76% of the gulls observed at the cherries were juveniles (based on 30 observations). On two occasions, three juvenile Herring Gulls *L. argentatus* were also seen feeding on the cherries. After feeding, the gulls regurgitated pellets composed of cherry stones, stalks and the outer skins of the fruit. A sample of 38 pellets contained on average 18.4 stones (range 6-31; SD 6.43), and a smaller sample of nine contained, as well as stones, an average of seven stalks (range 3-13; SD 3.67). Ten pellets were measured, giving an average size of  $36.5 \times 22.5$  mm (range  $51 \times 25$  to  $27 \times 19$  mm). Vernon (1972, *Bird Study* 19: 173-186), studying the food of British Common Gulls, found no records of their eating 'orchard' fruits; he did, however, quote two records of Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus* visiting

orchards on the Continent to feed on cherries during a drought. The summer of 1984 in Drumnadrochit was characterised by exceptionally dry weather, with rainfall 64% less than the usual March-to-August average; under such conditions, earthworms in particular would be hard to obtain. During this dry spell, gulls fed regularly in Drumnadrochit gardens, on household waste; adults appeared to exploit this food source more successfully than juveniles, which may explain why the latter were more often seen at the cherries.

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Since berries (e.g. *Empetrum* and *Vaccinium*) are apparently important in some areas as a food for this species (see *BWP*, vol. 3), it is perhaps not surprising that small stone fruits are also taken. EDS

**Early acquisition of first-winter plumage by White-winged Black Tern** On 14th September 1986, a White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* was located at Dungeness, Kent. Because of its lack of a conspicuous dark 'saddle' (mantle and scapulars), it was initially considered by some observers to be an adult in winter plumage. It was, however, a first-winter individual, as indicated by its extensively grey 'saddle', some remaining blackish juvenile lower scapulars, fresh juvenile wing pattern, and relatively dark (dusky grey) tail; this plumage is normally acquired in winter quarters and appears to be unrecorded among autumn records of the species in Britain (P. J. Grant *in litt.*). The possibility of Whiskered Tern *C. hybridus*, which regularly acquires first-winter plumage before or during migration (*Brit. Birds* 74: 43-45), was eliminated mainly by head pattern (very little black: typical of White-winged Black) and obvious white rump.

K. REID

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**Apparent food piracy by Wren on a Treecreeper** On the morning of 20th January 1983, in my garden on the Ashridge Estate in Hertfordshire, I was watching a Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* feeding on the base of a silver birch *Betula pendula* growing from the lawn. It was moving up the trunk when a Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* flew across, landed about 30 cm below it and proceeded to follow it upwards. When the Treecreeper located some food, the Wren displaced it, dug its beak into the same spot and then took off, presumably with the food item. The Treecreeper returned and continued to forage higher up the tree, but I did not see the Wren again. There is no doubt in my mind that the Wren took advantage of the Treecreeper's ability to locate a food item and then stole it.

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**Tree Sparrows defoliating rowan twigs** On 29th April and 3rd May 1983, at Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, I watched two Tree Sparrows *Passer montanus* collecting partly opened leaves from the twigs



of a rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* in a garden some 20 m from the window of our house. The leaves selected from the upper branches were at the soft, downy and still-folded stage. On the first occasion, only one sparrow carried leaves away, but the presumed pair arrived and departed together, making at least six visits over a 25-minute period. On the second occasion, both birds collected leaves and carried them away during a 15-minute period. The sparrows appeared to be flying to a railway embankment about 150 m away, where I presumed they were nesting. A few leaves were picked and later dropped, but most were taken in beakloads of three or four. The effect on the upper branches of the tree was quite marked for the rest of the year, with some twigs devoid of leaves except for a terminal tuft. In 1984, the behaviour was repeated by two Tree Sparrows on 25th April and by a single one on 26th April. I assumed that the leaves were being used as nest lining, but can find no parallel observations. The rowan is widely planted as a verge tree on this new housing estate and most gardens contain one, presumably as an 'anti-witch precaution' in accordance with Scottish folklore.

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## Letters

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**Seabirds on board ships** After reading the two letters concerning the record of the Capped Petrel *Pterodroma hasitata* at Barmston, Humberside (*Brit. Birds* 80: 284-286), I think the following incident may be of some interest.

On 8th October 1986, I was asked to identify three small birds on board the 11,000-ton cargo vessel *Lane* in Foynes Harbour, Co. Limerick. These proved to be two Storm Petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* and a Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. The captain told me they had landed on the ship in thick fog off the southeast coast of Ireland two days earlier. I found them scuttling about like mice among the chart cabinets on the navigation deck. When freed, they all flew, but one Storm Petrel did so rather weakly, landing on the water about 100 m away and swimming to the shore. The other Storm Petrel was much stronger on the wing and, after circling the harbour, flew off towards the open water of the Shannon Estuary. The Leach's Petrel also flew strongly, but went inland and was quickly lost to sight.

The exact position of the ship when the birds landed on it was not clear, but it seems certain that they were carried for at least 400 km.

This incident hardly seems to bear out J. R. Mather's contention that 'It is most unlikely that a bird of this kind would land on board a ship in its home waters in the first place, and, if it did, it would be likely to be cast overboard by the crew, whether alive or dead.'

EWART JONES

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**Ships and Capped Petrels** W. F. Curtis (*Brit. Birds* 80: 284-287) is not entirely correct in reporting that pelagic birds rarely come on board vessels. During some 25 years of collating Royal Naval Bird-watching Society notes, I remember many examples, indeed so many that we had to devise a special form for recording them, which resulted in the receipt of detailed descriptions of ten to 20 seabirds annually. While we do not seem to have had many from Bill Curtis, I note that he has also had up to 37 birds on board in a single night himself, though most soon left again (*Sea Swallow* 35: 33), so, despite the fact that he is supposed to spend his time in a radio shack, he has some knowledge of the subject.

In general, small seabirds not uncommonly come to ships' lights at night, when they may crawl into the machinery or land in the scuppers and die but escape attention for some time. Larger species occur less often, but may then strike the superstructure and suffer a similar fate. Fit birds are often kept overnight, but released next day, as in the case of two Cory's Shearwaters *Calonectris diomedea* of the North Atlantic race *borealis* which came on board at 38°S 42°W in their winter quarters in the South Atlantic (*Ibis* 97: 145-149) on 10th February 1985 (plate 197). Injured birds may be nursed on board for some time and released far away. Some species, notably Red-footed Boobies *Sula sula*, and also the American (or Snowy or Yellow-faced or Yellow-billed) Sheathbill *Chionis alba* which accompanied a Royal Fleet Auxiliary from the South Atlantic back to Plymouth in 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 591), may follow the ship for thousands of kilometres. Gulls have even been known to cross the North Sea in a state of suspended animation in a ship's freezer and revive afterwards (*Scotsman*,

197. Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*, at sea (38°S 42°W), February 1985 (W. R. P. Bourne)

24th January 1974, quoted in *Sea Swallow* 24: 63).



Despite these qualifications, I support Bill Curtis and John Mather in their protest at the treatment of the Capped Petrel *Pterodroma hasitata* washed ashore at Barmston, Humberside, on 16th December 1984. Although it was rather rare at one time, following the introduction of mammalian predators to its breeding islands in the West Indies, it appears to be increasing again in the cliffs, and is now once more 'fairly common' in a limited area along the edge of the American continental shelf to the north of its breeding-places (where I have seen them), with a peak in December when the Yorkshire bird was recorded (D. S.

Lee, *Amer. Birds* 40: 409-412). It seems unlikely that a body brought across the Atlantic on a ship would be thrown overboard only in the North Sea. If it was, it has been shown that bodies dumped there are most likely to drift east with the prevailing winds to the coast of Europe (C. J. Bibby, *Omis Scand.* 12: 261-265). On the other hand, a vagrant which wandered north along the warm water of the North Atlantic Drift to the coast of Norway seems likely to try to return through the North Sea and come ashore on the east coast of Britain.

W. R. P. BOURNE

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**The status of Little, Audubon's and 'Levantine' Shearwaters in Britain and Ireland** Since Curtis *et al.* (*Brit. Birds* 78: 123-138) questioned the status of several shearwaters in Britain, and I was originally responsible for this section of the British Ornithologists' Union's *The Status of Birds in Britain and Ireland* (1971), it may be useful to explain the situation. It was decided to follow the most generally accepted classification at the time, by the late Charles Vaurie (1965, *Birds of the Palearctic Fauna*, vol. 2) and to comment only briefly on races since they often intergrade and may then be hard to tell apart even in the hand, leave alone at sea. This led to the downgrading of both Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri* and 'Levantine' Shearwater *P. puffinus/yelkouan yelkouan*, covered at length in some previous publications, because Vaurie followed Hartert in treating the first as a race of the Little Shearwater *P. assimilis* and the second as a race of the Manx Shearwater *P. puffinus*. Thus, neither would ever have received much more than a passing mention even if it had not been decided that since their status was obscure it might be better to omit them.

It seems surprising that the Little and Audubon's Shearwaters are still described as sedentary species. As long ago as 1967, both Peter Post (*Bird Banding* 38: 278-305) and I (*Ibis* 109: 152) reported that they are among the water birds that tend to disperse into higher latitudes in the late summer. In addition, a Little Shearwater was first reported on board a vessel off Valentia, southwest Ireland, as early as 11th May in 1853 (*Zoologist* (1853): 3947-3950), at a time when it was postulated that such species might breed in that area. While further small shearwaters found more recently on the Pembrokeshire islands were initially dismissed as dwarf Manx, this is not normally such a variable species, and the measurements given, and especially the proportions, agree better with those of the Little Shearwater, which has now been proved to occur there (*Brit. Birds* 58: 349, 521-522; 59: 250-253; 79: 28-33, 681).

In addition to a growing number of Little Shearwaters, two Audubon's Shearwaters are reported to have reached Britain: British Museum (Natural History) specimen 1881-5-1-6012 from the Gould collection labelled 'said to have been killed in Devonshire -Mr (or nr?) Whitelees', which seems inadequate documentation, and one said to have been found on a beach near Hastings on 7th January 1936

discussed by the late J. M. Harrison (who was most hurt by my sceptical attitude) in his *Bristow and the Hastings Rarities Affair* (1968: pp. 61-64), and formally rejected by the BOU Records Committee in 1978 (*Ibis* 120: 411). Now, the following description of three birds identified as *yelkouan* off Devon in early May in unspecified years summarised from P. McCartney (*Brit. Birds* 79: 351-352) must surely raise the question whether Audubon's Shearwater has also been overlooked:

'First impression that it was a Little Shearwater—slightly shorter—much faster wingbeat than adjacent Manx. Immediately realised that it was only marginally smaller than Manx (5-10%) and obviously brown & white. Paler brown than Balearic, horizontal division through eye as sharp as Manx, white underparts . . . illustration 8b gives an excellent idea of the first two individuals I observed, the third may have been as large as that in illustration 8a, but, even so, its plumage was quite distinct from *mauretanicus* and nominate Manx.'

The illustrations attributed to *yelkouan* in question (*BWP* vol. 1, plate 15) show birds with clear-cut markings and pale, uniform brown backs which appear much more similar to Audubon's Shearwater.

Similar problems arise with the British status of the so-called 'Levantine' Shearwater *P. p./y. yelkouan* of the eastern Mediterranean, which has now been shown by ringing to migrate in a different direction, towards the Black Sea (which can also be regarded as a distinct species under the name 'Yelkouan Shearwater': *Brit. Birds* 81: 306-319). For half a century, this was also happily accepted as an occasional visitor to British seas, until H. F. Witherby showed that all the 19 traceable specimens (including nine from Yorkshire) belonged to a distinct form, *mauretanicus*, subsequently christened the 'Balearic Shearwater' when it was found to breed in those islands, which overlaps with *yelkouan* in its size and appearance (*The Handbook* vol. 4, p. 47). If the form *yelkouan* is as common off Yorkshire as suggested by Curtis *et al.*, it should have occurred among these specimens.

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**John Gould and the storm-petrels** While it was kind of the Editors to attribute a prediction, that Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* would prove to be numerous in western British and Irish waters, to me (*Brit. Birds* 80: 660), the credit for this discovery belongs elsewhere over a century before. On 10th May 1839, John Gould (*Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist.* 5: 139-146, nomenclature in brackets amended) wrote to the Chairman of the Scientific Committee of the Zoological Society of London during his historic tour of Australia:

'It is now twelve months since I left England. The early part of the passage was boistrous and adverse, our ship being detained eleven days in the Bay of Biscay, during which period numbers of land-birds, all of European species constantly visited the vessel; but as no great interest attaches itself to their chance occurrence, I shall confine my observations more particularly to those species which make the expansive ocean their home, and whose natural limits have been but slightly recorded. The members of the (Family Hydrobatidae) were the birds to which my especial attention was directed, from the circumstance of the group being but slightly understood . . .

'Immediately off the Land's End Wilson's Storm-Petrel (*Oceanites oceanicus*) was seen in abundance, and continued to accompany the ship through the Bay. The little Storm-

Petrel (*Hydrobates pelagicus*) was also seen, but in far less numbers: both species disappeared on approaching the latitudes of Madeira, their place being occupied by another species, which I took to be (Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*). This latitude was also favourable to the Shearwaters, (Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* and the Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*), the former being there in greater numbers . . .

'We crossed the equator on the 7th of July . . . This portion of the ocean's surface was also inhabited by Storm-Petrels, but of a distinct species from any I have hitherto observed, and which I believe to be new to science . . . As I had every reason to expect, I found the Australian seas inhabited by their own peculiar Storm-Petrels . . . four distinct species of which I have already observed since leaving the Cape . . .'

This account is remarkable for a number of reasons. Gould's observation that Wilson's Storm-petrel may occur off Land's End was quoted in the standard textbooks for a time and then, when nobody else noticed the birds, discounted. Similarly, some recent authors have also overlooked where he originally discovered both the Black-bellied *Fregetta tropica* and Grey-backed Storm-petrels *Garrodia nereis* (both of which I have seen in the same places), so that his type localities are still usually left blank on maps of their ranges. It is also interesting to observe that he was already applying the name 'storm-petrel' collectively to all the Hydrobatidae at such an early date, and what this supreme 'twitcher' thought of stray migrants. Unfortunately, once he reached the Southern Ocean and had made a representative collection, he concluded that much the same seabirds occur all around the world there, and took little further interest in them.

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## Announcements

**'BB'-Sunbird tour to Israel** The first BB-Sunbird tour to Israel, in 1981, was a great success (see *Brit. Birds* 74: 354-355). We are now planning a repeat visit, during 5th-19th April 1989. *British Birds* subscribers are exclusively entitled to a 10% reduction on the full price of this tour.

Israel's reputation as the hub of the Africa-Eurasia migration route is very well established these days and little needs to be said here of its ornithological riches. Suffice to say that well in excess of 200 species should be seen during the tour. Observations are likely to include spectacular raptor passages and most of the species for which Israel is famous, such as Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus*, Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*, Steppe Eagle *Aquila rapax*, Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus*, Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*, Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteini*, Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*, Hume's Tawny Owl *Strix butleri*, Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha*, Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus*, Arabian Warbler *Sylvia leucomelaena*, Orange-tufted Sunbird *Nectarinia osea*, Dead Sea Sparrow *Passer moabiticus*, and Desert Finch *Rhodospiza obsoleta*.

The tour will be split into two parts—a week in Eilat during 5th-12th April and a week touring around the rest of the country, during 12th-19th April. Each week can be taken separately, or put together as a two-week holiday. David Fisher and a *British Birds* representative will lead the tour jointly; and full details can be obtained from David at Sunbird, PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF.

Destinations for other BB-Sunbird tours planned for 1989 may include China. Watch *BB* for future announcements!

**'International Bird Identification'** This is the title of a 64-page booklet produced jointly by *British Birds* and the International Birdwatching Center Eilat. It contains 16 identification papers, by Per Alström, Bill Clark, Dr Philippe J. Dubois, Jon Dunn, Merav Gellert, Peter Grant, Krister Mild, Joe Morlan, Killian Mullarney, Klaus Malling Olsen, Urban Olsson, Dr Tim Sharrock, Hadoram Shirihi, Lars Svensson, Barry Taylor and Claudia Wilds. The main topics concern a variety of problem species and difficult groups or pairs, including Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus*; Lesser Spotted *Aquila pomarina*, Spotted *A. clanga* and Steppe Eagles *A. rapax*; Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*; Greater *Charadrius leschenaultii* and Lesser Sand Plovers *C. mongolus*; American *Pluvialis dominica* and Pacific Golden Plovers *P. fulva*; snipes *Gallinago*; small skuas *Stercorarius*; Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus*; Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*; Rock *Anthus petrosus*, Water *A. spinoletta* and Buff-bellied Pipits *A. rubescens*; Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*; Greenish *Phylloscopus trochiloides* and Arctic Warblers *P. borealis*; and Mountain Chiffchaff *P. sindianus*.

This booklet, which contains 45 photographs—36 of them in colour—is the official Proceedings of the 4th International Bird Identification Meeting, held at Eilat, Israel, during 1st-8th November 1986.

The usual price is £8.50, but it is available POST FREE to *British Birds* readers for £7.50, through British BirdShop. There are limited stocks, so please order at once if you want to be sure of obtaining a copy. Please use the British BirdShop order form on pages xiii & xiv.

**New Books in British BirdShop** The following books have been added to the British BirdShop list this month:

Brazil *A Birdwatcher's Guide to Japan*

Inskipp *A Bird Watcher's Guide to Nepal*

Isler & Isler *The Tanagers: natural history, distribution and identification*

Saunders *Where to Watch Birds in Wales*

These can be obtained POST FREE through British BirdShop. Please use the order forms on pages xiii & xiv.

**Photographs and drawings may be for sale** Many of the photographers and artists whose pictures appear in *British Birds* welcome the opportunity to sell their work. Anyone who wishes to obtain either photographic prints or original drawings is welcome to write (making an enquiry about availability, making an appropriate offer, or seeking the price) to the photographer or artist concerned, c/o Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ. We will forward all such letters, as a service to our readers and contributors.

## Request

**Photographs needed** For forthcoming papers in *British Birds*, we seek photographs (black-and-white prints or colour transparencies) of the following species:

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*

White-headed Duck *O. leucocephala*

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* (♀♀)

Pallid Harrier *C. macrourus* (♀♀)

Montagu's Harrier *C. pygargus* (♀♀)

Crane *Grus grus* (in flight)

Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo* (in flight)

Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*

Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*

South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki*

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

Elegant Tern *Sterna elegans*

Rufous Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*

Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus*  
 Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*  
 Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*  
 Bimaculated Lark *M. bimaculata*  
 Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*  
 Rock Pipit *A. petrosus*  
 Buff-bellied Pipit *A. rubescens*  
 Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* of  
   black-headed race *feldegg*  
 Citrine Wagtail *M. citreola*  
 White-throated Robin *Iranina gutturalis*  
 Wood Thrush *Hylocichla mustelina*  
 Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*  
 Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*  
 All *Hippolais* warblers  
 Green Warbler *Phylloscopus nitidus*  
 Two-barred Greenish Warbler  
   *P. plumbeitarsus*

Siberian Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*  
 Grey-streaked Flycatcher *M. griseisticta*  
 Asian Brown Flycatcher *M. latirostris*  
 Spotted Flycatcher *M. striata*  
 Semi-collared Flycatcher *Ficedula*  
   *semitorquata*  
 Collared Flycatcher *F. albicollis*  
 Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*  
 Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*  
 Isabelline Shrike *L. isabellinus*  
 Magpie *Pica pica*  
 Philadelphia Vireo *Vireo philadelphicus*  
 Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera*  
 Chestnut-sided Warbler *Dendroica pensylva-*  
   *nica*  
 Magnolia Warbler *D. magnolia*  
 Wilson's Warbler *Wilsonia pusilla*  
 Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea*

If you can help, please send prints or transparencies to Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

## Reviews

**Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario. Compiled by Michael D. Cadman, Paul F. J. Eagles and Frederick M. Helleiner.** University of Waterloo Press, Waterloo, Ontario, 1987. 617 pages; 299 line-drawings; numerous maps. US \$53.50.

The scale of the problems confronting ornithologists who are attempting an atlas of Canada is shown by this atlas, of the breeding birds of just one of Canada's provinces. Ontario, with an area of over one million square kilometres, and with the bulk of the relatively small population concentrated in the south, not only has the problem of a large area and few observers, but also difficulty of access to the northern areas created by forests and tundra, with few roads. One paragraph in the introduction will give an impression of the problems and of how they were solved:

'In the remote north (*i.e.* in blocks without road or rail access), coverage was often restricted to a few squares within each block. These were usually the most readily accessible squares, such as those with large lakes or rivers upon which float planes could put down safely, and small communities with airstrips, or along the coastal tundra where balloon-tired planes and helicopters could land. Except on dry coastal tundra, travel on foot in the remote north is severely restricted, so canoes were essential for gaining access to new squares with different habitat type. Consequently, coverage of river-edge and lake-edge habitat were usually better than habitats which had to be reached on foot, and this is probably reflected in the species maps.'

To overcome the problems, the 2,000 observers involved in this survey were asked to cover southern Ontario by 10 × 10 km squares and northern Ontario by 100 × 100 km blocks. The boundary between these two zones moved during the survey, as coverage in the south improved and a larger area was covered by squares. Throughout this atlas, therefore, the species distributions are shown on two maps, a large one covering southern Ontario, with each of the squares; and a smaller one showing the whole of Ontario with the distributions within blocks. Evidence of breeding is shown in orange according to the usual categories



(‘Possible’, ‘Probable’ and ‘Confirmed’). Estimates of abundance are shown separately, by means of histograms, for northern Ontario and for southern Ontario.

Each species is given a double-page spread: with the left-hand page devoted to text (in English) and a line-drawing of the species concerned, and the right-hand page filled with the two maps and histogram. Coverage in this much detail of the 286 breeding species in Ontario creates a gigantic book of over 600 pages.

The ever-increasing number of published bird atlases reveal dedication and a mammoth amount of fieldwork. No achievement so far, however, can have exceeded that revealed here. Anyone visiting Ontario will obviously wish to have a copy of this book; and so, too, will anyone remotely interested in bird distributions or atlassing methods. The book itself matches the scale of the project and justifies the effort expended by its organisers and field workers.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

**The Tanagers: natural history, distribution and identification.** By Morton L. Isler and Phyllis R. Isler. Smithsonian Institution Press and Oxford University Press, 1987. 404 pages; 32 colour plates; 263 maps. £65.00.

This is a further addition to the growing number of books on bird families, and an excellent one. With 242 species, the tanagers (here taken to include the honeycreepers and flower-piercers) constitute one of the largest of exclusively New World families; arguably the most attractive, morphologically not very varied, but with an unrivalled diversity of brilliant plumages. Perhaps surprisingly for Palearctic ornithologists, all the species may not yet have been discovered; two new ones have recently been described, one so distinct that a new genus has been created for it.

The Islers review the family very thoroughly. Thirty pages of introductory matter are followed by the main systematic section, consisting of entries for each species dealing with measurements and weights (plumage being covered by the plates and captions), range (with map), elevation (i.e. altitude range), habitat and behaviour, vocalisations, and breeding; followed by a summary of the sources used in the account—the last a valuable feature for the serious student. The 32 colour plates (by M. L. Isler) include all the species and all distinctive plumages for each one, including well-marked subspecies. Thus, 32 plumages are shown for the nine species of *Piranga*. Colour and reproduction are excellent, and the birds mostly well drawn, though some are unnaturally thick-legged.

No other book remotely approaches this as a source of information and illustrations of the tanagers. It is strongly bound, and of a handy size not inconvenient for a travelling birdwatcher. The price is high, but justified by the very high standard of the text, illustrations and production.

D. W. SNOW

**Wildfowl: an identification guide to the ducks, geese and swans of the world.** By Steve Madge and Hilary Burn. Christopher Helm, London, 1987. 298 pages; 47 colour plates; over 150 distribution maps. £19.95.

Following hot on the heels of *Seabirds* and *Shorebirds*, Christopher Helm (formerly Croom Helm) has now come up with *Wildfowl*, the third in this innovative, in-depth identification series. It is similar to its predecessors in format and has retained the improvements—such as the placing of the distribution maps opposite the plates—which were so successfully introduced into *Shorebirds*. It deals with 155 species of the world's wildfowl, with all but three recently extinct species illustrated in full colour, showing, as appropriate, male, female, eclipse male, juvenile, immatures and significant geographical variations. The text concentrates on identification, with sections on field identification, voice, detailed description (which includes ageing and sexing), bare parts, measurements, geographical variation, habits, distribution and population. A short introductory section sets out, amongst other things, the topography of a duck and a section on plumage sequences.

Initially, anyone browsing through this book will be attracted to the plates. Wildfowl are often poorly illustrated in field guides, and few artists seem to capture their distinctive jizz. Hilary Burn's paintings are, however, quite superb. She combines an

excellent feel for her subjects with an appropriate amount of plumage detail. The fact that most of these birds were painted from life is transparently obvious—if only all birds were so accessible to the artist. Before leaving the plates, I must, however, mention my only serious grumble: that of the captioning. Each species has been allocated a number in the text and the numerical sequence is adhered to in the captions, but not the plates. This means that the captions are not necessarily opposite the illustrations to which they refer and I found the need constantly to check each illustration against the caption very irritating. They should have followed the system in *Shorebirds*.

As to be expected of an observer of Steve Madge's quality, he has a very clear understanding of wildfowl identification. The text is both thorough and readable, and it makes a refreshing change from all those modern field guides that read more like a motorcycle manual than a bird book. Identification problems are discussed in depth and I 'tested' the book by looking carefully at some particularly prickly subjects—the identification of Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus*, Garganey *Anas querquedula* and immature Scaup *Aythya marila* for example—and I am glad to say that all are dealt with extremely well. I was particularly pleased to see a section on *Aythya* hybrids, with three line-drawings, but, since this is a recurring problem for European and North American observers, I wonder whether some of the more typical examples might have warranted a colour plate.

I found the sections on population particularly engrossing, and these give the book an extra dimension and provide fascinating, but often depressing, reading. Let us hope that this book will inspire young observers to take up the suggestion in the introduction and get involved in 'constructive wildfowl-watching' and thereby contribute further to our knowledge and understanding of these beautiful birds and, hopefully, help us to avoid some of the mistakes of the past.

All in all, this book is thoroughly recommended. My well-thumbed copy of Sir Peter Scott's *A Coloured Key to the Wildfowl of the World*, cherished for so many years, has finally been laid to rest on the bottom shelf of my bookcase. Its successor is excellent and a credit to all concerned.

KEITH VINICOMBE

**Where to Watch Birds in Wales.** By David Saunders. Christopher Helm, London, 1987. 245 pages; 30 line-drawings; 56 maps. Paperback £8.95.

Not being a fan of the increasing multiplicity of 'general' bird books, I approached this review task in a somewhat jaundiced and potentially critical frame of mind. Let me say, therefore, right at the start, that I think that David Saunders has done a useful job for Wales and for anyone who wishes to go birding in Wales.

The book's introductory section comprises two pages on Wales and its birds: far too little to do justice to the topic; a most valuable section on 'How to use this book'; and a short, but useful, glossary of Welsh names likely to be found on maps.

Core content comprises descriptive text for 55 sites, together with maps showing their locations and access to them. Each site-description is in turn composed of various sections. 'Habitat' includes a generalised geographical and vegetational account of the site, often allowing interesting expansions into notes on history, mammals, butterflies and other ecological interests of the place. 'Species' is a listing of the bird species likely to be seen, whilst the 'Timing' section suggests the best time of day (or, in appropriate cases, of tide) for maximum bird-sighting efficiency, and the 'Calendar' section expands on the species likely to be seen at different seasons of the year. 'Access' gives road numbers, and grid references where these are helpful. The site maps are also valuable in facilitating access, even though the scale is shown in millilitres rather than miles. One major criticism here: the counties used in this book are the old (pre-1974) Welsh counties; fine, since practically all bird recording in Wales still adheres to this system, but why no map showing new as well as the old county boundaries?

The book is completed by appendices of additional sites considered to be worth a visit, a listing of county avifaunas and organisations, a list of bird species with their Welsh and scientific names, and a bird-species index.

I judged the book on two main criteria: the accuracy for sites which I knew well, and the degree of help given for a site not previously visited. On the first count, the book performed

well (though the author baldly states as fact what local watchers would never dare publish; for example, are the Manx Shearwaters passing Point Lynas *known* to comprise birds from Bardsey, Rhum, Rathlin, Copeland and the Calf of Man?). On an outing to a site previously unknown to me, I found the access instructions were easy to follow, and I saw many of the species which were indicated for the appropriate season.

Basically then: the book is accurate (within the limitations of the reviewer's knowledge), interesting, very useful, and to be commended.

P. HOPE JONES

## If the caption fits . . .

**W**e have received scores of suggested alternative captions to photographs published in this occasional series. We publish below a selection of our favourites.

1. 'Yes, but *why* do we have to face left in field guides?' (John Cantelo)
2. 'Daddy, that Arctic Skua's been bullying me again.' (Peter J. W. Smith)
3. 'About . . . tern!' (N. Gammon, and Peter A. Williams, independently)
4. 'You 'orrible little man! 'Ave you never 'eard of an 'aircut before?' (Ian M. Hillery)



198. Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis*, Netherlands, September 1979 (P. Munsterman) (Originally published *Brit. Birds* 79: 678)



'Are we nearly in Africa?' (John Pearson)

2. 'And another piece of advice: steer well clear of Ghana. Your uncle met a very sticky end there . . .' (C. Craik)
3. 'I'm telling you, son . . . if you grow up with a yellow bill, you're going to make a lot of people very unhappy . . .' (Tim Cleeves)

199. Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis*, Netherlands, July 1966 (Jan van de Kam) (Originally published *Brit. Birds* 80: 75)

The two winners, John Cantelo and John Pearson, will each receive a prize of copies of *Frontiers of Bird Identification* and *The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic*.

# Monthly marathon

Sponsored by



**O**ur previous diving bird (the Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*, plate 34) provided a real identification pitfall, with less than 1% of competitors naming it correctly, but our latest one (plate 144) produced fewer problems. It was named as:

Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	(72%)
Sabine's Gull <i>Larus sabini</i>	(15%)
Little Tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i>	(4%)
Gannet <i>Sula bassana</i>	(3%)
Ross's Gull <i>Rhodostethia rosea</i>	(2%)

and with a few votes for Pochard *Aythya ferina*, Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*, Audouin's Gull *L. audouinii*, Common Tern *S. hirundo* and Arctic Tern *S. paradisaea*.

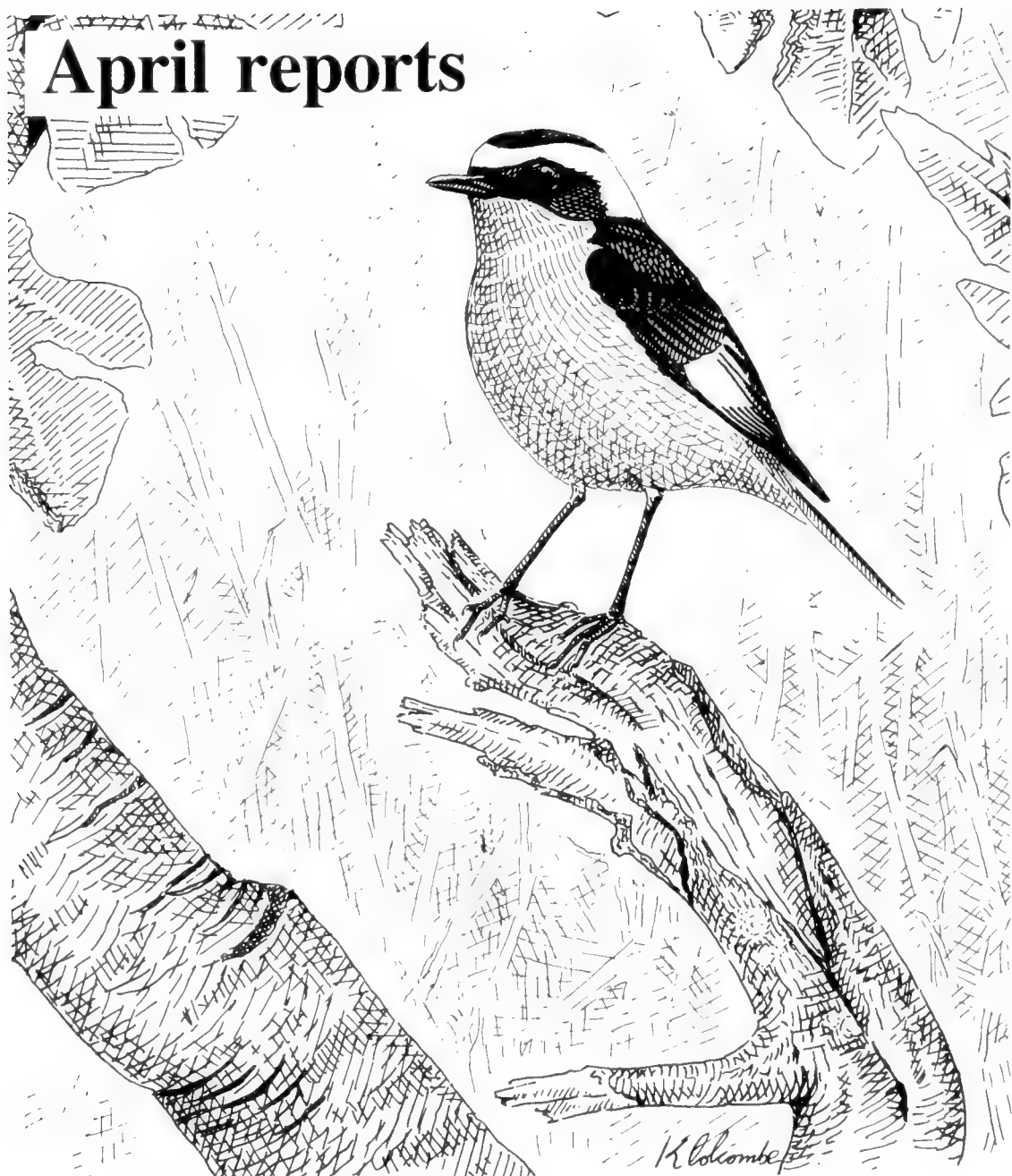
It was indeed a Kittiwake, photographed in Co. Cork in January 1986 by Richard T. Mills.

Our current leader, Anthony McGeehan, moved one step nearer the prize—a SUNBIRD holiday in Africa, Asia or North America—by giving his eighth consecutive correct answer. By the time this month's photograph comes into the reckoning, Anthony McGeehan will either have won the prize (in which case plate 200 will be the first in the *third* 'Monthly marathon' competition) or will have failed at the ninth or tenth hurdle (plates 159 or 189). A group of 22 competitors on four-in-a-row is waiting to take up the challenge.

**200.** Second 'Monthly marathon' competition. Photograph number 16. Identify the species. Read the rules on page 49 in the January 1988 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th September 1988.



# April reports



*Ian Dawson and Keith Allsopp*

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records.  
Unless otherwise stated, dates refer to April 1988

*Anticyclones stayed near to Britain and Ireland for most of the month, with consequent light winds, often easterly in southern England. Temperatures were low, except during two spells when unsettled cyclonic weather arrived from the south, on 11th and 12th, and from 15th to 21st.*

## **Redstart surprise**

For two birds new to Britain and Ireland to turn up within two days is remarkable. That they belong to the same genus and come from two quite different parts of the world is the stuff of which birders' dreams are made. Dreams they will remain, however, for all but the respective finders.

First was a stunning male **Moussier's Redstart** *Phoenicurus moussieri* at Strumble Head (Dyfed) around 27th, which was fortunately captured on film, as it could not be found the following day. Assuming a wild origin, it is proof yet again that even the most unlikely species are candidates for vagrancy. Others that spring to mind from recent years are the Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda* and the White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* in May-July 1982 and June 1982, respectively (*Brit. Birds* 78: 475-481; 79: 221-227).

Less of a surprise, in terms of its long-distance migration, was the male **Daurian Redstart** *P. aureus*, a first for the Western Palearctic, which spent 29th and 30th skulking down rabbit burrows on the Isle of May (Fife). Sadly, it died, and the skin is now lodged with the Royal Scottish Museum. In 1980, D. I. M. Wallace listed some 38 Palearctic passerines (excluding North African species) as potential vagrants to Britain and Ireland (*Brit. Birds* 73: 388-397). With the Daurian Redstart, at least six of these have now turned up.

### Divers to Spoonbill

**White-billed Divers** *Gavia adamsii* remained in Lothian and Shetland, though a less usual visitor to the latter county on 14th was a **Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus*, Fair Isle's first since 1979. The **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* was last seen at Kenfig Pool (Mid Glamorgan) on 1st, while another appeared at Glencolumcille (Co. Donegal) towards the end of the month.

After a small late-winter influx, some half dozen **Shags** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* remained inland in southern England, and two were watched fishing by Blackfriars' Bridge (Greater London) on 8th.

The end of March and first few days of April suggested that we might be in for a southern heron spring, but the early promise was not fulfilled. There were four reports each of **Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus* (plates 206 & 207) and **Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* (plate 201), and six each of **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* and **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea*, all in the south of England and Wales, bar a Night Heron in Tyne & Wear which was shot, and a Little Egret at Loch Spiggie (Shetland) on 6th. A single **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* appeared on the River Slaney (Co. Wexford) from 20th to 28th.

Three **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* were also seen early in the month (plates 209 & 210), with a fourth at Arkholme (Lancashire) on 24th. The only **Black Stork** *C. nigra*, seen passing southwest high over Chew Valley Lake (Avon) on 10th, was relocated a couple of days later at East Allington (Devon), where it remained until

17th. Some ten **Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* included inland birds at Ashleworth Ham (Gloucestershire) on 10th, and at Kingsbury Water Park (West Midlands) on 23rd.

### Wildfowl to raptors

A flock of 132 **Barnacle Geese** *Branta leucopsis* was watched heading north over Filey (North Yorkshire) as late as 26th, while a **Brent Goose** *B. bernicla* of the Nearctic race *nigricans* remained on Jersey into April. **Teals** *Anas crecca* of the Nearctic race *carolinensis* were seen in Oxfordshire and Norfolk, while

201. **Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Somerset, April 1988 (Andrew Pierce)





half a dozen **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* in the north or west, all drakes, included two together at New Passage (Avon) on 2nd, and at Fairburn Ings (West Yorkshire) from 27th. Three or four **Surf Scoters** *Melanitta perspicillata* frequented both shores of the Firth of Forth (Lothian/Fife), and there were two drake **King Eiders** *Somateria spectabilis* in Shetland as well as Loch Fleet's (Highland) resident individual.

Following the exceptional March influx, **Red Kites** *Milvus milvus* continued to tantalise county listers far and wide; there were more than 60 April sightings away from their breeding areas, though clearly many of these reports relate to multiple sightings of wandering birds. They ranged from Scilly to Norfolk and north to North Yorkshire, with eight Orkney and four Shetland sightings (only two previous Shetland records!). Seven **Black Kites** *M. migrans* were seen along the English south and east coasts, with one inland at Fleet Pond (Hampshire) on 23rd. Six **Montagu's Harriers** *Circus pygargus* came in between 16th and 21st, and **Marsh Harriers** *C. aeruginosus* were very widely reported. Of 26 English **Ospreys** *Pandion haliaetus*, ten were reported between 11th and 14th, with a further six between 23rd and 25th.

### Game-birds and waders

Blows Downs (Bedfordshire) had an early **Quail** *Coturnix coturnix* from 26th. Well scattered through the month were some 20 **Cranes** *Grus grus* in eastern England, Scotland and the Northern Isles.

The only **Black-winged Stilts** *Himantopus himantopus* reported were in the Channel Islands, with one on Guernsey from 31st March until 9th (plate 202), and another on Alderney for about a week at the same time. Surprisingly, there had been only one previous record from these islands. **Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta* were on the move from 18th, with singles and small parties appearing in the following few days on the west coast, from Avon north to Strathclyde. **Stone-curlews** *Burhinus oedinenus*, too, were reported on this date from Portland (Dorset), and Sker Rocks (Mid Glamorgan); one at Barns Ness (Lothian) on 16th was the first for that region, while another on the Yeo Estuary (Avon) was the first in Avon for 20 years.

Four **Kentish Plovers** *Charadrius alexandrinus* was a poor showing, but one of these was at Dawlish Warren (Devon), which hosted

the eighth British **Greater Sand Plover** *C. leschenaultii* from 27th.

A **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* stayed on the River Hamble at Curbridge (Hampshire) from 4th to 21st, and the wintering **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularia* remained at Seaview (Isle of Wight) and on the River Plym (Devon) throughout, in what was generally a disappointing month for waders. **Common Sandpipers** *A. hypoleucos* were widely reported to be in lower-than-average numbers; Fair Isle (Shetland) had none, but made up for it with a count of ten **Green Sandpipers** *Tringa ochropus* on 20th. A **Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* was seen off St Abbs (Borders) on 3rd, and an early **Red-necked Phalarope** *P. lobatus* was at Holkham (Norfolk) from 26th.

### Skuas to Wryneck

The first English south coast **Pomarine Skuas** *Stercorarius pomarinus* were two reported past Prawle (Devon) on 17th, followed by 31 at Dungeness (Kent) on 23rd and 24th. Four long-staying **Ring-billed Gulls** *Larus delawarensis* remained to the first week. Twenty **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucoides* and 18 **Glaucous Gulls** *L. hyperboreus* were on the move and widely reported in the first half of the month, though there were only two Icelands after 16th. **Kittiwakes** *Rissa tridactyla* continued to appear inland in small numbers, while more than 10,000 per hour were counted flying southeast past Rosehearty (Grampian) on 12th. **Little Gulls** *L. minutus*

**202.** Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Guernsey, April 1988 (P. W. Atkinson)





built up to 511 at Seaforth (Merseyside) on 14th, and later in the month typically appeared in double figures on southern inland waters, and associated with them were small numbers of **Black Terns** *Chlidonias niger*. Migration of **Arctic Terns** *Sterna paradisaea* was very evident on 25th, when 382 passed Brean Down (Somerset), and there were more than 80 in Bedfordshire.

A **Stock Dove** *Columba oenas* on North Ronaldsay (Orkney) around 15th was a great local rarity. **Swifts** *Apus apus*, early this year, were widely reported from 16th in small numbers, though they had built up to 500 at Chew Valley Lake by 30th. Ten more **Alpine Swifts** *A. melba* were seen in southern England and Wales, half in the first four days, and four between 15th and 21st.

A solitary **Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* graced St Martin's (Scilly) from 19th for the rest of the month, and **Hoopoes** *Upupa epops* topped 40, including 14 between 20th and 25th, and

four on Jersey. A few **Wrynecks** *Jynx torquilla* drifted to our shores from 13th.

#### Larks to thrushes

Four **Shore Larks** *Eremophila alpestris* at Staithes (North Yorkshire) on 17th was a good find after a poor showing again this winter. Numbers of **Sand Martins** *Riparia riparia* seemed to be up again, and they were even reported to outnumber **Swallows** *Hirundo rustica* in some regions. On 23rd, a good day for movement of small birds, there were 150 **Sand Martins** at Chew Valley Lake and 160 at Barrow Gurney Reservoir (Avon). Five **Red-rumped Swallows** *H. daurica* were seen on 22nd and 23rd from Jersey and Kent across to Avon, with later two or three again in Kent, and one near Wexford (Co. Wexford) from 15th to 29th.

Three **Bluethroats** *Luscinia svecica* (plates 203-205) included two white-spotted males *L. s. cyanecula*. There was a good fall of small



203-205. Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*, Dorset, April 1988 (above left, B. E. Slade; above right, P. R. Boardman; below, E. Brodie)



migrants, including **Redstarts** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* on the Isle of Wight on 16th, with 20 at St Catherine's Point and 15 at The Needles. Four **Whinchats** *Saxicola rubetra* on South Walney (Cumbria) on 19th were the earliest there by six days. Summer migrants generally were reported to be either a little early, or, at worst, on time.

A superb adult male **Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis* remained rather elusive on Portland from 16th to 23rd, but there was a good passage of **Ring Ouzels** *Turdus torquatus* on 16th along the English south and east coasts, from the Isle of Wight to Norfolk (where there were at least 40), and inland on the Bedfordshire downs; peak passage on the Northern Isles was a few days later, with more than 30 daily on Fair Isle during 20th-23rd, and a maximum of 50 there on 21st.

#### Warblers to buntings

A **Cetti's Warbler** *Cettia cetti* at Spurn (Humberside) on 3rd was yet another addition to that observatory's long list, while **Grasshopper Warblers** *Locustella naevia* showed well on passage, Fair Isle recording a spring maximum of ten on 30th. No less than six **Subalpine Warblers** *Sylvia cantillans* arrived from 22nd, from St Agnes (Scilly) and Dungeness (Kent), north to Hilbre

206 & 207. Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*, West Sussex, April 1988 (below, Tony Croucher; right, Peter Gasson)

(Merseyside) and Fair Isle, by way of Landguard's (Suffolk) third record in only 19 months. A male **Sardinian Warbler** *S. melanocephala* on Birsay (Orkney) during 24th-26th was less expected. The 3rd saw a fall of 50 **Chiffchaffs** *Phylloscopus collybita* and 100 **Goldcrests** *Regulus regulus* on South Walney, with a further 60 of the latter at Spurn, though the peak movement of **Firecrests** *R. ignicapillus* at Landguard was on 17th, with six.

Of eight **Great Grey Shrikes** *Lanius excubitor*, only one, at Aberlady (Lothian) on 28th, was in the latter part of the month. Scilly had three **Woodchat Shrikes** *L. senator* (plate





208. Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*, Scilly, April 1988 (P. Hopkins)

208), though the monopoly was broken on the last day of the month with one at Heysham Harbour (Lancashire).

Of five **Serins** *Serinus serinus* reported, only one, at Wivenhoe (Essex) from 4th to 5th, was away from the English south coast. Single **Hawfinches** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* were new site records at Landguard on 4th and The Needles on 16th. After a poor winter for the species, a count of 320 passage **Bramblings** *Fringilla montifringilla* on Fair Isle on 20th was notable.

A **Lapland Bunting** *Calcarius lapponicus* at Rampside (Cumbria) on 3rd was a good local record, and there was a high count of 50 at Fife Ness (Fife) the following day. **Ortolan Buntings** *Emberiza hortulana* were

noted between 20th and 24th on St Agnes, Portland and Anglesey (Gwynedd).

#### Recent rarities decisions

The following records have been accepted: **Daurian Starling** *Sturnus sturninus* on Fair Isle (Shetland) in May 1985, and **Wilson's Warbler** *Wilsonia pusilla* at Rame Head (Cornwall) in October 1985. Both involve species new to Britain and Ireland which have now attained Category A status. There were two claims of **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* for October 1986: the record from Fair Isle (Shetland) has been accepted, but that from Bryher (Scilly) has not. (Contributed by P. G. Lansdown)

209 & 210. White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, Gwynedd, April 1988 (left, Jeff Higgott; right, Steve Young)



# News and comment

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*Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett*

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

**Birdwatching in Pakistan** Erik Hirschfeld has sent us a copy of his report on a birdwatching trip he and two colleagues made to Pakistan earlier this year. As well as an itinerary and list of species seen, there are many useful hints and much helpful information on travel, hotels, food, birding sites and so on. Anyone visiting Pakistan for the first time in a small group would find it of great help. They saw 310 species in a three-week stay which concentrated on the areas around Karachi, Sukkur and Islamabad (Rawalpindi to Bechum). To obtain your copy of the report (produced, incidentally, within just ten days of his return), send £3.00 to Erik Hirschfeld, Södra Förstads-gatan 62, S - 211 43 Malmö, Sweden.

**Rare breeders disturbed** It is a sad reflection on the behaviour and attitudes of some birders that the RSPB, in a spring Press Release, once again found it necessary to make a strong plea for a more responsible attitude to scarce breeding species. People bashing the Devon bushes to flush out Cirl Buntings *Emberiza cirlus* prompted this action. Soon afterwards, another species, breeding in Britain for the first time, was subjected to a steady flow of visitors—some of them trespassing and trying to take photographs. Fortunately, that situation was soon sorted out, but it should never have arisen in the first place. Surely that extra year-tick or photograph ought to take second place to the welfare of the birds? Bad behaviour is generally frowned upon and

quickly rooted out at a big twitch, and rightly so; the same rules must apply with breeding rarities. All it needs is a bit more thought and self-discipline.

**Flamborough Seabird Cruises** Skuas and shearwaters will be among the highlights expected on a series of cruises organised by the RSPB to look at seabird migration off Flamborough Head this autumn. The three-to four-hour trips leave Bridlington and venture 6.5 km off the headland, where last year four species of skua *Stercorarius* were seen, together with Sooty Shearwaters *Puffinus griseus* alongside the boat. For further information, contact the RSPB East Midlands Regional Office, 12 Guildhall Street, Lincoln LN1 1TT, tel.: Lincoln (0522) 35596.

**Nature in Art** The new International Centre for Wildlife Art is now open at Wallsworth Hall, Gloucester (see *Brit. Birds* 80: 650). The wildlife art gallery and gardens are open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. from Tuesday to Sunday and on Bank Holiday Mondays. Situated only 4 km north of Gloucester on the A38, a visit could easily be combined with one to the Wildfowl Trust at Slimbridge. Those wishing to take advantage of the special facilities for disabled people are advised to telephone in advance: Gloucester (0452) 371422. Nature in Art is organised by The Society for Wildlife Art of the Nations (SWAN), Wallsworth Hall, Sandhurst, Gloucester GL2 9PA.

## Recent reports

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*Compiled by Mark Boyd*

This summary covers the period 20th June-17th July 1988

**Frigatebird** *Fregata* Dublin Bay (Co. Dublin), 24th June.

**Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus* Aberlady Bay (Lothian), 13th July.

**Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* Stanpit (Dorset), 17th July.

**Bridled Tern** *Sterna anaethetus* Anglesey

(Gwynedd), from 2nd July; Hauxley (North-umberland), 12th July.

**Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* Stithians Reservoir (Cornwall), 22nd June; Beachy Head (Sussex), 9th July.

**Pallas's Rosefinch** *Carpodacus roseus* North Ronaldsey (Orkney), from 22nd June.

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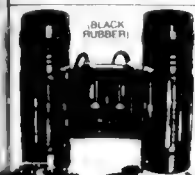
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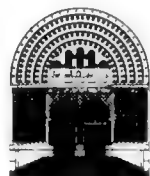


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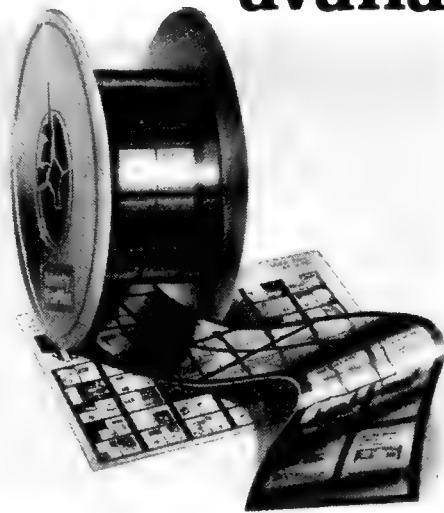
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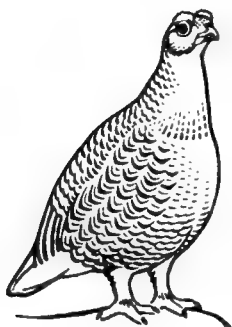
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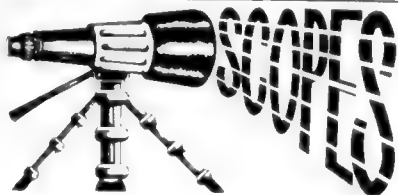
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# British Birds

VOLUME 81 NUMBER 9 SEPTEMBER 1988



## Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 1986

*Robert Spencer and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel*

**T**his is the fourteenth annual report published by the Panel and in style of presentation it follows the conventions used in that for 1985 (*Brit. Birds* 81: 99-125). It is relatively complete, in that counties which normally have data to submit have once again kindly co-operated with the Panel. The Panel is warmly appreciative of the many recorders, and some individual observers, who take great trouble to submit exemplarily detailed reports. Whilst any record is very welcome, the somewhat sketchy returns from a few recorders could be made infinitely more valuable by the provision of rather more detail. Those who edit their reports to the Panel on the grounds of security may note that the Panel rarely names sites (*Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* on Havergate* would be a typical exception—and all exceptions have been authorised by the reporter), names counties only when authorised to do so by the recorder, and sometimes prefers to refer only to the region even when permitted to name the county.

The membership of the Panel remained unchanged in 1986, being Dr L. A. Batten, R. H. Dennis, Richard Porter, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock and Robert Spencer (Secretary). Whilst the work of the Panel is sponsored and wholly funded by the NCC, the RSPB, the BTO and *British Birds*, it is considered important that, in the framework of the Panel's activities, the members should be free to have allegiance primarily to the birds. For that reason, their appointments to the Panel are in a personal capacity, albeit

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[The publication of this report has been subsidised by a donation from the RSPB]

with a specialised knowledge of the interests and requirements of the sponsoring bodies.

Of the natural phenomena which affect birds, climate—the sum of our daily weather patterns—is generally the most pervasive, and there are a number of telling illustrations of this to be found in the present report. Various of the recorders, on submitting data for Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, Red Kite *Milvus milvus*, Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* (now almost extinct in its former stronghold of Kent), Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* and Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*, commented that severe winter cold of February 1986 had reduced the breeding stock. The cold about which they remarked is detailed vividly in the relevant numbers of *Climate Monitor*\*: 'Bitter east-northeast winds aggravated the effects of daytime maximum temperatures, which did not rise above 0°C for days. Mean temperatures were often 4-5°C below average . . . It was generally the coldest February since 1947, and the second coldest of the century.'

If low winter temperatures reduced the potential breeding stock of some species, the weather experienced in spring and early summer was often unhelpful to pairs attempting to breed. The spring of 1986, to quote again from *Climate Monitor*, was 'the coldest since 1979, and the eleventh coldest this century in central England.' Nor was it just a matter of temperature. One nest of Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* was washed out; Roy Dennis, in summing up the breeding season for the Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, wrote that the weather had been 'cold, wet and very windy', with at least three nests being blown out; elsewhere the nesting attempts by Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax* and Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* were thwarted by high, or rising, water levels. Of April, *Climate Monitor* records 'It rained frequently—20 to 25 days of the month in many places . . . May continued wet except in East Anglia and southeast England . . . apart from East Anglia, sunshine totals were low.'

Next to weather, it is possible that people often pose the greatest threat to the breeding attempts of rare birds: a threat which may be an innocent or unthinking one, as was probably the case where the nest-tree of a Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* was felled during routine forestry operations outside the breeding season. The Panel members, as individuals, share the widespread concern about some of the tree planting which is taking place in areas such as the Flow Country of northern Scotland, but have generally found that those foresters responsible for managing mature forest are very sympathetic towards the needs of wildlife, and it is to be hoped that the nest-trees of rare species such as Honey Buzzard, Red Kite, Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* and Hobby *Falco subbuteo* will always receive sensitive attention. In a somewhat different, yet analagous, situation, how gratifying it is to learn of farmers delaying the harvesting of fields in order that Montagu's Harriers *Circus pygargus* might safely fledge their young.

There are, alas, still cases of 'malice aforethought'—of deliberate intent: the theft of six clutches of Red Kite eggs, of three Osprey clutches, and of an unknowable number of Goshawk clutches. These are all Schedule I

\**Climate Monitor*, vol. 15, nos. 1 & 2, published by the Climatic Research Unit of the University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ.

species, and, if their nests were as inviolate as the law intends them to be, much of the money which has to be spent trying to protect individual nests could be used for reserve acquisition. In *Gulliver's Travels*, Jonathan Swift drew attention to the absurdity of some human behaviour. Were he alive today, he would surely make some trenchant comments about the 'fossilised dinosaurs' who carry into the late twentieth century the untutored collecting instincts of their Victorian forebears. Perhaps there is a lesson in the fact that a pair of Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii*, so threatened in their African winter quarters, were able to breed successfully on territory controlled by the Ministry of Defence, and that various pairs of Stone-curlews, Dartford Warblers and other species bred securely on MoD firing ranges.

When the Panel precisely defined 'rare breeding birds' as being those species with breeding populations below, or sometimes falling below, 300 pairs, it became apparent that several species hitherto ignored would have to be added to its list. Thus it comes about that this report includes information about Pochard *Aythya ferina*, with a preponderance of pairs in the metropolitan counties; Quail *Coturnix coturnix*, the generally late arrival of which might lend some credence to the suggestion (made in discussions between the late Reg Moreau and the late Kenneth Williamson) that those breeding in Britain have already bred once in Mediterranean Europe; the ever-dwindling Corncrake *Crex crex*; Woodlark *Lullula arborea*, a species which seems to be finding the earliest stages of afforestation and of post clear-felling very attractive; and Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*, the most northerly individuals of which have now reached the fringes of mountain Britain, a habitat which differs little from that of some of their Continental strongholds: will the limestone crags and the millstone grit of the Pennines soon be echoing to their song, or will the sixty-fifth generation of city-bred individuals no longer recognise their true biotope and continue to seek out power-stations, gas-works and similar industrial buildings? Time will tell.

The species for which the Panel requires data were listed in the March 1988 issue (*Brit. Birds* 81: 102-103); Quail *Coturnix coturnix* and Corncrake *Crex crex* should be added to this list.

## Key to geographical regions used in this report

Numbers refer to fig. 1.

1. NORTHERN IRELAND Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, Tyrone
2. ENGLAND, SW Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Isles of Scilly, Somerset, Wiltshire
3. ENGLAND, SE Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Greater London, Hertfordshire, Kent, Middlesex, Oxfordshire, Surrey, Sussex (East and West)
4. ENGLAND, E Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Lincolnshire & South Humberside, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Suffolk
5. ENGLAND, CENTRAL Derbyshire, Herefordshire, Leicestershire (with Rutland), Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire (West Midlands in the new county structure), Worcestershire
6. ENGLAND, N Cheshire, Cleveland, Cumbria, Durham, Greater Manchester, Isle of Man, Lancashire, Merseyside, Northumberland, North Humberside, Tyne & Wear, Yorkshire (North, South and West)
7. WALES All present-day counties (i.e. includes the former Monmouth)

- 8. SCOTLAND S The former counties of Ayrshire, Berwickshire, Dumfriesshire, Kirkcudbrightshire, Lanarkshire, Lothian (East, Mid and West), Peeblesshire, Renfrewshire, Roxburghshire, Selkirkshire, Wigtownshire
- 9. SCOTLAND, MID Aberdeenshire, Angus, Banffshire, Clackmannanshire, Dunbartonshire, Fife, Kincardineshire, Kinross, Morayshire, Nairn, Perthshire, Stirlingshire
- 10. SCOTLAND, N & W Argyll, Bute, Caithness, Inverness-shire, Orkney, Ross & Cromarty, Shetland, Sutherland, Western Isles (Outer Hebrides)

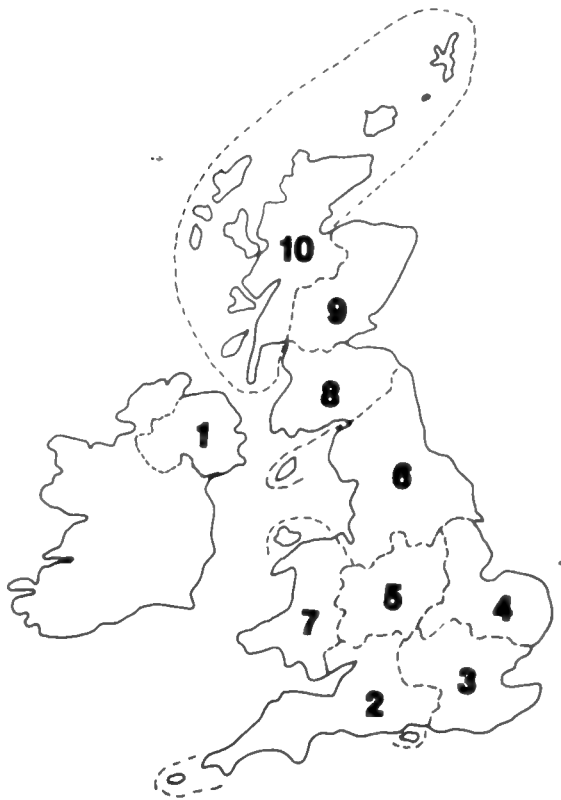


Fig. 1. Geographical regions of the United Kingdom used in this report. Numbers refer to counties listed above.

Systematic list

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

One locality: one individual.

Scotland, N & W One locality: adult ♀ mated with ♂ Black-throated Diver *G. arctica*. Laid twice: the first clutch was flooded out; the second, of one egg, hatched, but the chick disappeared.

This is the second consecutive year that a hybrid pair has attempted to breed in northwest Scotland.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Five localities: one pair and at least three other individuals.

England, E Two localities: (1) one in full breeding plumage from 17th April to 29th May; (2) thought to be the same individual as at locality 1 from 6th June to 20th August.

Wales One locality: one in full breeding plumage from 14th April to 20th June.

Scotland, S Two localities: (1) single on 4th May; (2) one from 21st April to 9th July, pair from 13th May to 20th June: thought to have chosen nest site, but breeding abandoned because of heavy rain and disturbance by small boats.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	5	2	0	1	3	3	2	2	1	1	5
No. individuals	5	2	0	1	4	2	2	3	1	4	5
No. pairs	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1

The pair in Scotland was at the site occupied in 1985, but breeding success remains elusive.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

43 localities: 68-87 pairs breeding.

England, SW One locality: pair in breeding plumage in habitat suitable for breeding from 26th April to 6th May, and some display seen.



**Scotland, S** One locality: one summered for second consecutive year, from 4th May to 12th October.

**Scotland, N & W** 41 localities.

INVERNESS-SHIRE 38 localities: (1)-(38) total of 63 pairs, rearing at least 37 young.

ELSEWHERE Three localities: (1)-(3) total of five pairs, one of which reared two young.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	23	15	18	27	36	35	25	44	26	40	43
Confirmed (pairs)	70	42	37	58	53	52	51	41	39	63	68
Possible (pairs)	5	9	18	19	27	19	8	38	21	18	19
Max. total (pairs)	75	51	55	77	80	71	59	79	60	81	87

There was again good coverage of the breeding sites in 1986. Of the 68 established pairs in 1986, 53 pairs are known to have reared 39 young.

**Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis*

14 localities: 11-32 pairs breeding.

**England, E** Six localities: (1) three adults displaying in ideal habitat during 24th May to 4th June; (2)-(5) two pairs moving between four sites, the extreme dates being 4th May and 14th July, with much display, juveniles present in August, but judged unlikely that they were bred at any of the four sites; (6) pair present in breeding plumage at potentially suitable site from 24th to 30th May.

**England, Central** One locality: one from 5th to 12th May, two, displaying, from 8th to 12th May, not seen thereafter.

**England, N** Two localities: (1) birds present, but no apparent nesting attempt; (2) nine or ten pairs hatched 15-18 young during July, nine well-grown young still present on 19th August.

**Wales** One locality: one on 12th July.

**Scotland, Mid** Four localities: (1)(2) two to five pairs reared unknown number of young; (3) seven on 31st March, with maximum of 18 on 11th May, and one, moulting, on 14th September; (4) two, thought to be pair, from 7th to 13th May.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	2	7	6	6	9	7	12	19	15	15	14
Confirmed (pairs)	10	11	13	12	11	5	11	11	16	8	11
Possible (pairs)	1	5	2	2	10	7	10	21	12	13	21
Max. total (pairs)	11	16	15	14	21	12	21	32	28	21	32

There has been at least one recent case of pairs of Black-necked Grebes moving about between waters for two or more years before eventually settling at one of them and breeding.

**Black-browed Albatross** *Diomedea meianophris*

One locality; one summered with Gannets *Sula bassana*.

**Scotland, N & W** One locality.

SHETLAND One locality: adult in gannetry from 18th March to 6th September.

Another year of solitary attendance.

**Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris*

12 localities: 23 or 24 booming males.

**England, E** 11 localities: (1) five booming in April; (2) up to three in spring, including one booming ♂; (3) at least two booming in April; (4) two booming; (5)-(11) singles booming at each locality.

**England, N** One locality: six or seven booming.

	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	18	17	21	19	16	15	18	18	15	12
Confirmed (pairs)	0	2	1	4	1	1	0	5	0	0
Booming ♂♂	43	47	51	48	47	35	44-45	36	28-29	23-24

A further decline, with both fewer localities holding Bitterns and fewer males booming. As in 1985, the decline may have been due to the cold winter.

### **Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus*

One locality: one calling male.

**England, E** One locality.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE One locality: single ♂ spent long periods calling from a reedbed throughout 28th and 29th June.

The first proved breeding this century occurred in the north of England in 1984.

### **Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus*

Four localities: two feral pairs and 12 singles.

**Scotland, Mid** One locality.

DUNBARTONSHIRE One locality: two feral pairs built nests, but were flooded out and did not re-lay.

**Scotland, N & W** Three localities: (1) ten adults from 24th May to 7th June, but no evidence of breeding activity; (2) single adult on 23rd June, but nothing to suggest breeding; (3) single on several dates between 16th June and 23rd July.

The most recent cases reported to the Panel of breeding by wild Whooper Swans were in 1978 and 1979.

### **American Black Duck** *Anas rubripes*

One locality: female mated with male Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*.

**Scotland, S** One locality.

EAST LOTHIAN One locality: ♀ seen between 8th February and 27th April, but no subsequent sign of any hybrid young.

The same individual was present at this locality, paired to a male Mallard, in 1985 (but was not seen in 1987).

### **Pintail** *Anas acuta*

12 localities: 6-16 pairs breeding.

**England, SE** Two localities.

KENT Two localities: (1) pair from 10th to 12th May; (2) one on 29th June, ♀ on 30th June, three on 3rd July, and singles on five dates in July.

**England, E** Two localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: (1) pair on 30th April, and singles on five dates in May; (2) pair, which possibly bred.

**England, N** Two localities.

CHESHIRE One locality: two pairs in late April, but no nest found, nor brood seen.

CUMBRIA One locality: pair from 23rd March to 27th April.

**Wales** One locality.

ANGLESEY One locality: pair present on 6th May at a regular wintering site.

**Scotland, N & W** Five localities.

ARGYLL One locality: two or three ♂♂ and a ♀ in suitable breeding habitat between 10th and 14th May, pair on 6th June.

CAITHNESS One locality: three ♂♂ and a ♀ on a loch on 6th May.

ORKNEY Three localities: (1) at least four pairs bred, a ♀ and seven young being seen on 8th June; (2)(3) single pairs bred.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	10	15	10	19	15	16	18	22	15	13	12
Confirmed (pairs)	6	10	7	10	9	8	7	12	5	9	6
Possible (pairs)	10	16	16	31	16	23	25	15	13	8	10
Max. total (pairs)	16	26	23	41	25	31	32	27	18	17	16

Except in Scotland, few counties report regular breeding by this species.

**Garganey** *Anas querquedula*

38 localities: 9-51 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** Four localities: 2-4 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Avon	1	0	1	0	1
Gloucestershire	2	0	1	1	2
Hampshire	1	0	0	1	1

**England, SE** Three localities: 0-3 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Kent	3	0	0	3	3

**England, E** 24 localities: 7-44 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Cambridgeshire	3	7	0	9	16
Lincolnshire/South Humberside	1	0	0	1	1
Norfolk	15	0	0	15	15
Northamptonshire	3	0	0	3	3
Suffolk	2	0	0	2	2

**England, Central** Three localities: 0-3 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Staffordshire	3	0	0	3	3

**England, N** One locality: one pair breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
North Humberside	1	1	0	0	1

**Wales** One locality: 0-1 pair breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Gwent	1	0	0	1	1

**Scotland** Two localities: 1-2 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
East Lothian	1	0	0	1	1
Dunbarton	1	1	0	0	1

The Dunbarton pair was flooded out at an early stage.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	34	48	66	58	46	29	38
Confirmed (pairs)	4	8	10	15	4	4	9
Possible (pairs)	50	50	84	51	53	33	42
Max. total (pairs)	54	58	94	66	57	37	51

As in 1985, the region 'England, E' has provided the greatest number of records.

### **Pochard** *Aythya ferina*

54 localities: 98-139 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** Four localities: 7-9 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Wiltshire	4	7	1	1	9

**England, SE** 26 localities: 65-82 pairs breeding, 40 young reported.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Buckinghamshire	2	3	0	0	3
Essex	4	12	0	2	14
Hertfordshire	5	6	0	0	6
Kent	5	7	10	0	17
Middlesex	7	35	4	0	39
Surrey	3	2	0	1	3

**England, E** Nine localities: 16-25 pairs breeding, 51 young reported.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Lincolnshire/South					
Humberside	3	7	7	0	14
Suffolk	6	9	0	2	11

**England, Central** Seven localities: 3-7 pairs breeding, seven young reported.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Leicestershire	2	2	0	0	2
Shropshire	1	1	0	0	1
Staffordshire	4	0	0	4	4

**England, N** Seven localities: 7-10 pairs breeding, 23 young reported.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Cleveland	1	1	0	0	1
Cumbria	3	0	0	3	3
Greater Manchester	2	2	0	0	2
Lancashire	1	4	0	0	4

**Wales** One locality: 0-6 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Carmarthen	1	0	6	0	6

This is the first year in which the Pochard has featured in the Panel's report. The distribution is similar to that for the years 1968-72 mapped in *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland* (1976), but the summary tables provide new information on the size of the breeding population.

### **Scaup** *Aythya marila*

Two localities: two males.

**Scotland, Mid** One locality.

PERTSHIRE One locality: ♂ on 11th, 21st and 27th May, and 4th June.

**Scotland, N & W** One locality.  
SUTHERLAND One locality: ♂ on 23rd June (not seen during visits on 28th May and 12th June).  
These are the first reports of summering Scaups submitted to the Panel since 1981.

**Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra*

35 localities: 8-100 pairs breeding.

**Northern Ireland** One locality.  
CO. FERMANAGH One locality: probably 17 pairs breeding, but potentially 21 pairs.  
**England, N** Two localities: (1) ♂ on 21st May, ♀ on 13th July, ♂ on 27th July, five ♂♂ and one ♀ on 7th August; (2) six on 23rd June.  
**Scotland, S** One locality: pair watched 4th-8th May, only ♂ present on 10th June; in July, ♀ with single chick, which disappeared when about half grown.  
**Scotland, Mid** Two localities.  
DUNBARTONSHIRE/STIRLINGSHIRE One locality: minimum of two pairs plus single ♂.  
PERTSHIRE One locality: four pairs on 5th May, 14th May and 8th June, five ♀♀ on 27th June, two ♀♀ on 10th July.  
**Scotland, N & W** 29 localities.  
ARGYLL One locality: eight ♂♂, seven ♀♀ and three not sexed present on 23rd June; two nests located in July.  
INVERNESS-SHIRE Nine localities: (1) four ♂♂ and nine ♀♀ on 13th June, 11 ♀♀ on 5th July, (2) two pairs on 5th May; (3) pair, ♀ off nest on 11th July; (4) ♀ off nest on 11th July; (5)-(8) pairs in May; (9) ♀ on 30th July.  
ROSS & CROMARTY Two localities: (1) ♂ on 1st May, pair on 6th May, ♂ and two ♀♀ on 21st May, four pairs on 10th June; (2) two pairs on 6th May, ♀ on 10th June.  
SUTHERLAND AND CAITHNESS 17 localities: (1) five pairs, ♀ with three young; (2) four pairs; (3) three pairs; (4) two pairs plus single ♂; (5)(6) two pairs at each; (7) ♀ with three young; (8) ♀ with seven eggs; (9) pair plus single ♀; (10)-(15) single pairs at each; (17) lone ♀.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	14	13	9	17	10	6	17	6	9	21	35
Confirmed (pairs)	22	24	16	98	7	5	14	10	17	2	8
Possible (pairs)	137	132	125	30	106	77	98	75	52	56	92
Max. total (pairs)	159	156	141	128	113	82	112	85	69	58	100

The considerable increases between 1985 and 1986 reflect increased fieldwork in Scotland. Especially in Co. Fermanagh, the trend has been steadily downwards; Dr Karl Partridge of the RSPB has provided annual figures for that population showing a decrease from an estimated 95 pairs in 1973—the year in which the Panel started assembling data—to 17 in 1986. Including pairs in the Republic of Ireland, Dr Partridge estimates the total Irish population at probably about 100 pairs. The summer birds in northern England are perhaps not significant, but note the breeding attempt in southern Scotland.

**Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula*

11 localities: 77-86 pairs breeding.

**England, Central** One locality.  
LEICESTERSHIRE One locality: ♀ on 16th and 17th July.  
**England, N** Three localities.  
CUMBRIA Three localities: (1) four in June and July; (2) ♀ summered; (3) ♀ in June and July.  
**Wales** One locality.



ANGLESEY One locality: ♂ on 16th May, pair on 8th June, and pair nearby on 27th June.  
**Scotland, Mid** Four localities.  
PERTSHIRE Four localities: (1) two on 1st June; (2) pair on 7th May; (3)(4) singles in May.  
**Scotland, N & W** Of 77 clutches laid, 52 were incubated and the resulting 46 broods totalled at least 390 young. The average brood size was 8.48. ~

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Confirmed (pairs)	5	6	12	22	26	29	27	47	53	67	77
Young hatched	46	11	40	110	165	286	220	209	311	336	390

The species continued to thrive in its Highland Region heartland and there are the first signs of an extension of the Scottish breeding range, encouraged by the provision of nestboxes. There is also a possible slight increase in the numbers summering south of the breeding range, although those in May could well be late-departing winter visitors.

**Smew** *Mergus albellus*

One locality: one individual.

**Scotland, N** One locality: adult ♂ from early May until at least 7th September, at loch also frequented in 1985; assumed to be the same individual.

One year, perhaps . . .

**Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus*

Six localities: 1-6 pairs breeding.

**England, SW & SE** Five localities: (1) pair nested, but young died in nest; (2) one on several dates between 26th April and 29th June in possible breeding habitat; (3) pair on several dates between July and August, but the tree in which Honey Buzzards have apparently nested in recent years was felled during routine forestry operations; (4) one, sometimes two, seen during the breeding season, but not often, and no proof of breeding; (5) one, perched in centre of a wood, on 12th June: known that it did not nest in that particular wood, but other suitable woods within 5-10 km.

**England, E** One locality: one in brief soaring display on 23rd May.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Confirmed (pairs)	0	2	1	2	3	2	2	1	1	1	1
Max. total (pairs)	7	8	8	4	5	9	3	3	1	4	6

The Panel is aware that there are gaps in the information on this species, and we hope that coverage will improve in the future.

**Red Kite** *Milvus milvus*

57 pairs, of which 23 pairs reared 29 young.

**England, SW** One broad area: 'seen fairly frequently' from mid March and a local belief that breeding might have occurred, but no significant evidence.

**Wales** 57 localities: (1)-(57) at least 39 pairs laid eggs and a further 18 pairs were known, of which 13 built nests, but apparently did not lay. Possibly a few of these had laid eggs and failed quickly, but in most cases the nests were incomplete. In addition, at least 24 unmated birds were identified in April, giving a total population of 138 or more. Twenty-three successful pairs reared 29 young between them, six broods of 2 and 17 of 1, the best breeding result for at least a century. This was despite the robbery of at least six clutches of eggs by egg-collectors and attempts to rob other nests. The number of breeding pairs fell slightly compared with 1985, probably owing to abnormally high mortality over the winter period. No fewer than six Red Kites were found dead between January and March, including one ringed as a nestling in 1969, the oldest recorded Welsh Kite to date. Two of these had been poisoned (by baits laced with *Fenthion*) but the other four were probably hard-weather casualties. The total population at the end of the breeding season stood at 167 or more.

The Panel is grateful to Peter Davis and the Kite Committee for providing this most informative report.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Total pairs	36	34	39	42	42	46	47	46	46	54	57
Breeding pairs	29	28	32	30	29	32	38	33	33	43	39
Successful pairs	15	12	13	14	21	18	19	20	13	19	23
Young reared	18	17	22	18	27	21	23	24	21	25	29

It is very satisfying to compare the present position with that of only ten years ago.

**White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Re-introduction: five pairs nested.

**Scotland** Five pairs nested, an increase of one on the total for 1985, and one pair reared two young, but the other four pairs failed.

All records of White-tailed Eagles in Scotland should be sent to Roy Dennis, RSPB Highland Office, Munlochy, Ross & Cromarty IV3 3ND, or to the Panel's Secretary (see address at the end of this report).

**Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*

24 localities: 82 young reared from 34 nests.

**England, E** 24 localities: (1)-(24) 33 ♀♀ paired to 26 ♂♂ (of the latter, five were bigynous and one trigynous). There were 27 successful nests, which produced a mean of three fledged young, or 2.4 young per nest started. Two other pairs may have nested, one of which may have reared young. Fledged brood sizes were two of 1, nine of 2, five of 3, eight of 4 and three of 5. Nests failed owing to probable flooding (1), predation (1) and desertion by the ♂ (1) or ♀ (1). One pair failed when the ♂ and three young died, probably after ingesting poison. A ♀ failed probably because the eggs were infertile, and another pair failed for unknown reasons but re-nested and reared two young. Four nests were in cereals and the remainder in reeds. A minimum of 20 ♀♀ and 13 ♂♂ summered, but did not breed. Once again this was a slight increase on the previous record number of nests in any one season this century, and might have been higher but for the poor spring weather. Productivity was about the average for the previous ten years. Since 1972, the failure rate of the known 291 Marsh Harrier nests has been 16.8%.

The Panel is grateful to John Day for providing this summary.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Breeding ♂♂	11	13	14	11	16	17	19	21	27	28	26
Breeding ♀♀	11	15	14	16	20	20	24	28	32	31	33
Fledged young	27	44	36	38	44	48	59	71	66	86	82
Mean fledged young per nest	2.4	2.9	2.6	2.4	2.2	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.4	3.0	2.4

This species is occurring with increasing frequency, and the Panel is anxious to receive all breeding-season records.

**Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus*

Six localities: 7 pairs breeding.

**England** Six localities: (1)-(6) seven pairs reared 13 young from eight nests, fledging two broods of 1, three broods of 2, and one of 5. One ♀ abandoned a single egg after prolonged heavy rain, but subsequently paired with a different ♂ and re-nested; this second nest also failed, when the young were taken by a predator, probably a fox *Vulpes vulpes*. All the nests were in cereal crops. The number of breeding pairs was the highest since 1972, in which year 14 young fledged from eight nests. Productivity was, however, disappointing, with the mean brood size, at 1.6, well below the average of 2.2 recorded for this species in Britain.

The Panel is grateful to John Day for compiling this summary. As with the Marsh Harrier, the Panel is anxious to receive all breeding-season records.



	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	4	2	7	4	8	8	7	8	2	8	6
Confirmed (pairs)	3	1	2	2	2	2	3	6	1	3	7
Possible (pairs)	2	1	5	2	6	7	5	4	1	5	3
Max. total (pairs)	5	2	7	4	8	9*	8	10	2	8	10
Fledged young	6	0	3	7	4	4	4	9	3	7	13

The readiness of this species to nest in cereals, and the co-operation of the farmers concerned in modifying their farming practices, together hold out the promise of a better future for it in Britain.

**Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis*

112 localities: 53-112 pairs breeding.

**England & Wales** 92 localities involving 25 counties: (1)-(92) 48 pairs known to have attempted breeding, rearing at least 46 young; also 15 pairs 'probably' breeding and 29 pairs 'possibly' breeding, giving a maximum total of 92 pairs.

**Scotland** 20 localities, involving five regions: (1)-(20) five pairs known to have attempted breeding, rearing at least 11 young; also seven 'probable' and eight 'possible' pairs, giving a maximum total of 20 pairs.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Counties*	10	15	18	21	21	27	16	17	21	17	30
Confirmed (pairs)	12	15	14	23	17	15	23	30	35	32	53
Possible (pairs)	16	22	26	21	32	37	18	25	41	33	59
Max. total (pairs)	28	37	40	44	49	52	41	55	76	65	112

\*In Scotland, from 1985, regions, not counties.

The summary table shows that, with few interruptions, the trend is still upwards, despite continued severe persecution in certain counties. The increase is widespread, and the Goshawk is now breeding in several counties which, until recently, might have been judged unsuitable for it.

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*

42 eyries: 24 pairs reared 48 young.

**Scotland** 42 pairs occupied eyries and clutches of eggs were laid in 34 nests, in one case two ♀♀ laying in the same nest. Twenty-four of the nests were successful, a total of 48 young fledging. The mean brood size was 2.0, and the productivity per occupied nest was 1.4, the lowest figure since 1978. A wet and windy breeding season contributed to the poor success, and three pairs were robbed by egg-thieves. (All breeding data compiled by Roy Dennis on behalf of the RSPB.)

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Pairs	14	20	22	25	25	25	30	30	31	34	42
Successful pairs	10	7	11	16	19	20	21	20	21	22	24
Young reared	20	13	19	30	41	42	45	45	47	53	48

The upward trend continues.

**Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*

32 counties: 91-291 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** 34-122 pairs breeding, 54 young known.

County	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Avon	0	4	3	7
Cornwall	0	0	2	2
Devon	4	0	0	4
Dorset	13	5	0	18
Gloucestershire	2	0	0	2
Hampshire	10	0	c. 30	c. 40
Somerset	2	4	17	23
Wiltshire	3	8	15	26

**England, SE** 35-106 pairs breeding, 43 young known.

County	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Bedfordshire	4	3	2	9
Berkshire	0	0	4	4
Buckinghamshire	11	7	0	18
Essex	2	3	0	5
Hertfordshire	3	6	28	37
Kent	0	2	2	4
Surrey	11	2	4	17
Middlesex	1	0	0	1
Sussex	3	6	2	11

**England, E** 10-38 pairs breeding, nine young known.

County	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Cambridgeshire	3	0	3	6
Huntingdonshire	1	2	1	4
Lincolnshire/South Humberside	0	0	2	2
Norfolk	3	0	0	3
Northamptonshire	3	11	3	17
Suffolk	0	1	5	6

**England, Central** 10-21 pairs breeding, 17 young known.

County	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Derbyshire	1	0	1	2
Herefordshire	0	0	3	3
Leicestershire	3	1	1	5
Shropshire	2	0	0	2
Staffordshire	0	0	3	3
Warwickshire	1	0	1	2
Worcestershire	3	1	0	4

**England, N** One pair breeding, at least one young reared.

**YORKSHIRE** One pair bred.

**Wales** 1-3 pairs breeding, two young known.

**GWENT** One pair bred, rearing two young, and there were two additional 'possible' pairs.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Confirmed (pairs)	59	51	70	80	64	51	97	80	93	76	91
Possible (pairs)	84	68	86	52	91	109	105	182	116	143	200
Max. total (pairs)	143	119	156	132	155	160	202	262	209	219	291
Young reared (minimum)	69	78	96	72	86	89	63	104	91	82	126

These are the highest figures since the Panel started collecting data in 1973. Some of the increase is due to additional sources of information



which have become available, and some to increased fieldwork by groups of enthusiasts. The data presented are nevertheless known still to be incomplete, and there are grounds for believing that the population of this splendid little falcon is increasing.

It is interesting to look at the fluctuating regional distribution of the species, taking the maximum figures and expressing each regional population as a percentage of the whole.

	England SW	England SE	England E	England Central	England N	Wales
1984	36.4	44.0	12.5	5.3	0	1.9
1985	40.6	38.8	14.6	3.6	0	2.3
1986	41.9	36.4	13.0	7.2	0.3	1.0

The consistently low proportion from eastern England may be a reflection of the intensive agriculture there, although the species is breeding successfully in areas of mixed farmland far removed from the more characteristic lowland-heath habitat.

**Quail** *Coturnix coturnix*

75 localities: 1-99 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** 31 localities: 0-43 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Devon	4	0	0	4	4
Dorset	9	0	0	9	9
Wiltshire	18	0	15	15	30

**England, SE** 19 localities: 0-25 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Berkshire	1	0	0	1	1
Buckinghamshire	7	0	4	4	8
Essex	2	0	0	2	2
Kent	3	0	0	3	3
Sussex	6	0	0	11	11

**England, E** 10 localities: 0-13 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Cambridgeshire	2	0	0	2	2
Huntingdonshire	3	0	0	6	6
Lincolnshire/South Humberside	5	0	0	5	5

**England, Central** 12 localities: 1-12 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Leicestershire	5	0	0	5	5
Staffordshire	2	0	1	1	2
Shropshire	5	1	1	3	5

**England, N** Two localities: 0-5 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Cleveland	2	0	1	4	5

**Scotland, N & W** One locality: one individual.

OUTER HEBRIDES One singing.



This is the first time that the Quail has featured in the Panel's reports, and possibly the first time in many years that Quail data have been brought together nationally. A feature common to many of the reports is the apparent late arrival, with much singing in June and the first half of July.

**Corncrake** *Crex crex*

Two localities: two singing.

**England, Central**

STAFFORDSHIRE One locality: one singing at dusk on 25th March, a very early date.

**Scotland, N & W**

CAITHNESS One locality: one singing: 'This is the least number ever recorded for the county.'

The Corncrake is a 1986 addition to the Panel's list, and it is likely that some recorders have omitted to send records on this first occasion. No attempt is being made to collect data from the Hebrides or Northern Ireland, but records from anywhere else in Britain are requested.



Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

Three localities: 0-4 pairs breeding.

**England, E** Two localities: (1) heard singing on 18th and 19th May and 17th and 18th June; (2) one singing from 22nd April to 4th May, and probably a different individual from 29th May to 19th June.

**England, Central** One locality: single singing on numerous occasions between 29th June and 9th August, and seen once.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Counties	1	3	6	2	1	3	1	3	3	2	3
No. localities	2	4	6	4	3	4	2	6	4	2	3
Singing ♂♂	2	7	6	8	4	9	3	12	10	3	4

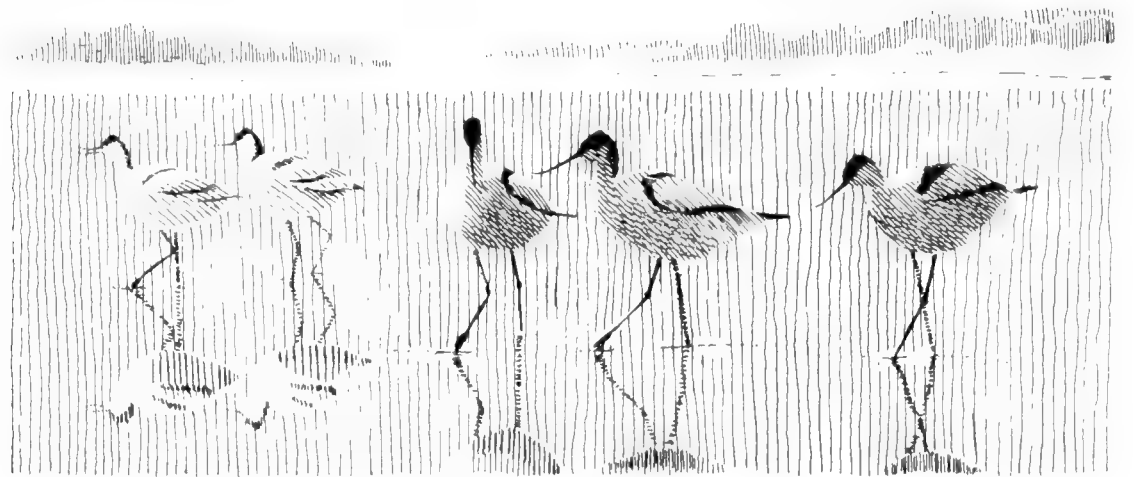
The somewhat erratic breeding-season occurrences of the species may be determined, at least in part, by the suitability of weather conditions for ‘overshooting’ on spring migration.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

15 localities: 255-292 pairs reared at least 227 young.

**England, SE & E** 15 localities. The year was characterised by poor breeding success at the key Suffolk sites of Havergate, where 100 pairs fledged only 23 young, and Minsmere, where 40 pairs reared 30 young.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	5	6	3	3	5	5	9	9	11	14	15
Confirmed (pairs)	151	146	145	147	168	201	190	238	237	269	255
Young reared (minima)	68	14	92	99	101	155	150	192	118	245	227



A second consecutive year with over 200 young reared and, if present trends continue, the population will soon exceed 300 pairs.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedinenus*

Eight counties: 117-118 pairs, of which 103 are known to have laid eggs.

**England, SW** 30 pairs, of which 11 are known to have laid eggs and four to have hatched young. Half the nests were on arable land and the remainder on downland.

**England, SE** Six, or possibly seven, pairs, four of which are known to have laid eggs. Four of the nests were on arable land, one on downland, and one unspecified.

**England, E** 81 pairs, most of which are known to have laid eggs. About half of the total number of nests were on arable land and half on heathland.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Confirmed (pairs)	16	4	20	34	8	10	8	20	19	68	103
Possible (pairs)	93	23	14	47	37	43	59	76	52	47	15
Max. total (pairs)	109	27	34	81	45	53	67	96	71	115	118

The information for 1986 is based largely, but not exclusively, on a major survey by the staff of the RSPB, and the Panel is most grateful for the co-operation afforded by the survey leader, Dr R. E. Green. In connection with this survey, it would be a great help if observers who have submitted Stone-curlew records to the Panel in the last ten years (whether directly or through their recorders) could check their areas again *and submit negative records if the species is now absent*.

As the RSPB survey did not begin until 1985, it would be unwise to compare the totals in the table for the earlier years with those for 1985 and 1986.

**Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus*

Estimate of at least 600 pairs breeding.

**England** Four localities: (1) two pairs bred; (2)-(4) single pairs, but no evidence of breeding.

**Scotland** A paper by Dr Adam Watson and Robert Rae (*Scot. Birds* 14: 191-198) reported on fieldwork covering 15 years, and estimated the breeding population in Scotland as at least 600 pairs.

In view of this report, the data submitted to the Panel are too fragmentary to merit separate publication. At the same time, since the estimate is described by the authors as ‘rough’, the Panel thinks it important to continue collecting as much precise information as possible. To ensure that the net is cast widely enough, it may be added that, in Scotland, Watson & Rae found Dotterels summering, and sometimes breeding, on partly bare grouse moorland as low as 450 m.

**Temminck’s Stint** *Calidris temminckii*

Two localities: 1-3 pairs breeding.

**Scotland, N & W** Two localities: (1) four adults on 15th June, two of them song-fighting, at least one nest successful, with two young seen on 16th-17th July; (2) one adult, seen once on 17th June, but at a regular site.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Localities	2	3	3	4	5	1	3	1	1	2	2
Confirmed (pairs)	1	0	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Possible (pairs)	3	5	5	4	5	1	2	2	1	2	2
Max. total (pairs)	4	5	6	6	6	1	3	2	1	2	3

The report of a parent with two small chicks, no locality given, has been omitted on the grounds that it could refer to locality 1, above.

**Purple Sandpiper** *Calidris maritima*

One locality: 1-2 pairs breeding.

**Scotland, N & W** One locality: at least one, and probably two pairs, clutch of four eggs located, and adult with small young seen on 11th July.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	3	1
Confirmed (pairs)	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Possible (pairs)	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	2	1
Max. total (pairs)	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	3	2

A third consecutive year of successful breeding, but a tiny population such as this must remain very vulnerable.

**Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax*

Seven localities: at least one pair bred.

**England, SE** Two localities: (1) one on 25th May, 14 on 22nd June; (2) eight on 29th/30th June.

**England, E** Three localities: (1) 18 ♂♂ displaying in May and 22 ♂♂ in June, but water levels too high for nesting; (2) 50 ♂♂ and 3 ♀♀ observed at lek, one ♀ with well-grown young on 17th July; (3) at least seven ♂♂ and three ♀♀ in suitable breeding habitat in June.

**England, N** Two localities: 2-4 ♂♂ lekking to 3-4 ♀♀ and possibly moving between the two sites.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	6	6	4	12	10	10	13	8	6	6	7
Nests	4	0	0	3	3	0	1	2	0	0	1
Max. no. ♀♀ possibly nesting	17	16	4	22	13	13	23	32	6	?	9

Some of the dates are atypically late for passage migrants.

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*

19 localities: 23-47 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** One locality.

SOMERSET One locality: three present to 1st June, but no evidence of breeding attempt.

**England, SE** Two localities: (1) two pairs bred and one additional ♂ displaying, two broods, but only one young reared; (2) nine on 6th May.

**England, E** 13 localities: 20-34 pairs breeding.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Six localities: (1) five pairs, all with clutches of 4; (2) four pairs all with clutches of 4; (3) one pair, clutch size not known; (4) one pair with repeat clutch of 4; (5) one pair, with unsuccessful clutch of 4 eggs, which re-nested on adjacent arable; (6) at least two pairs which nested in arable and led their chicks to wetland.

NORFOLK Two localities: (1) five pairs laid four clutches of 4 and one of 5; (2) five pairs summered, but only one pair bred successfully, rearing single chick.

LINCOLNSHIRE/SOUTH HUMBERSIDE One locality: six on 30th March, one displaying on 20th April, and up to nine in June.

ELSEWHERE Four localities: (1) pair displaying at end of May; (2) three pairs probably bred; (3) pair probably bred; (4) individuals present in breeding season, but no further information disclosed.

**England, N** One locality.

LANCASHIRE One locality: two pairs at site where breeding has occurred in past.

**Scotland, N & W** Two localities.

ORKNEY One locality: pair bred, two fledged young on 27th July.

SHETLAND One locality: pair present, no nest found but alarm behaviour suggested presence of young.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	13	11	13	13	11	5	13	10	12	10	19
Confirmed (pairs)	72	37	50	39	52	22	38	32	55	22	23
Possible (pairs)	15	33	18	25	25	4	31	12	25	14	24
Max. total (pairs)	87	70	68	64	77	26	69	44	80	36	47



This species remains tolerably widespread, but it seems possible that the large increase in the number of localities reported for 1986 has arisen at least partly as a result of some areas having been subdivided.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*

Two localities: 2-3 pairs breeding.

**Scotland, N & W** Two localities.

INVERNESS-SHIRE Two localities: (1) up to three adults between 4th May and 15th July, adults with young on 16th to 19th June and 4th to 15th July: two different broods; (2) singles seen between 20th May and 6th June, and on 21st June and 30th July, display, but no proof of breeding.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	3	4	7	3	4	1	4	3	4	3	2
Confirmed (pairs)	1	2	4	2	7	1	3	1	4	2	2
Possible (pairs)	2	3	6	2	5	0	3	4	1	1	1
Max. total (pairs)	3	5	10	4	12	1	6	5	5	3	3

Like those of Temminck's Stint and Purple Sandpiper, this is a tiny population, apparently just managing to sustain itself, mainly at two localities.

**Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus*

Two localities: 14-16 pairs breeding.

**Scotland, N & W** Two localities: (1) two pairs probably bred; (2) 12-14 pairs present and most presumably bred.

The results for 1986 continue the seemingly inexorable decline of recent years.

**Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus*

Five localities in four counties: 1-5 pairs breeding.

**England, SE** One locality.

KENT One locality: breeding pair present from 15th April to 28th May, nest with three eggs on 13th May, eggs apparently hatched, but no young located.

**England, E** Three localities.

LINCOLNSHIRE/SOUTH HUMBERSIDE Two localities: (1) pair of adults in full breeding plumage, with regular courtship between 29th March and 12th April, possibly longer; (2) first-summer individual present in colony of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* on 9th May.

SUFFOLK One locality: pair established scrape, and copulation observed, but they were harassed by Black-headed Gulls and both left after a brief stay.

**Scotland, Mid** One locality: one in hill-top colony of Common Gulls *Larus canus*, thought not to have built nest, but remained for about three months.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	1	2	1	3	5	4	2	6	4	2	5
Confirmed (pairs)	1	1	0	2	1	3	2	2	4	3	1
Possible (pairs)	0	1	1	1	4	3	1	6	1	3	4
Max. total (pairs)	1	2	1	3	5	6	3	8	5	6	5

The optimism generated by the promising situation in 1985 seems to have been a little premature. On the other hand, there are now genuine pairs of the species, whereas in the early years many of the records were of this species mating with Black-headed Gulls.

**Roseate Tern** *Sterna dougallii*

The Panel has, since 1985, collected reports of Roseate Terns breeding

away from the larger colonies, which are already subject to regular monitoring.

**England, SW** Two localities: (1) pair reared two young; (2) present in ternery during breeding season.

**Scotland, S** One locality: 24 pairs reared at least 34 young."

**Scotland, N & W** Two island localities, with several on each; two pairs seen feeding dependent young on 19th August.

Dr Mark Avery, who is making a special study of this species, writes 'Since 1969, when the British breeding population was estimated at 670 pairs, the population has fallen to about 120 known pairs in 1987. Similar declines have taken place in Ireland (both in the Republic and in Northern Ireland) and in France. The West Palearctic stronghold for the species is now known to be the Azores, where over 600 pairs were found in 1984. As indicated by the colony in S. Scotland, breeding success is generally high in British colonies (although better data are required), so it may be that the status of this species is largely affected by factors acting outside the breeding grounds, e.g. trapping in West Africa.'

### **Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*

One locality: one individual.

**Wales** One locality.

CAERNARVONSHIRE One locality: one on 24th June.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	2	4	4	0	2	0	0	1	2	2	1
Confirmed (pairs)	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possible (pairs)	1	0	4	0	2	0	0	1	2	2	1
Max. total (pairs)	2	4	4	0	2	0	0	1	2	2	1

The species seems to be moving towards becoming a rare non-breeding bird, although one or two springs with warm southerly winds could bring it back to this northwestern extremity of its range.

### **Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla*

Nine localities: 1-9 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** Two localities.

DEVON One locality: one singing from 5th May to 22nd June.

WILTSHIRE One locality: one singing on 10th June.

**England, SE** One locality.

ESSEX One locality: one singing in suitable breeding habitat on 5th May.

**England, E** One locality.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE One locality: one singing in typical breeding habitat in May.

**Scotland, N & W** Five localities.

INVERNESS-SHIRE Four localities: (1) one pair fledged at least three young; (2) one singing on 30th May; (3) one singing on 1st July; (4) one singing on 13th July.

ROSS-SHIRE One locality: one singing on 30th June.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	7	17	22	7	11	2	9	14	9	9	9
Confirmed (pairs)	1	7	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Possible (pairs)	6	12	19	8	13	2	10	15	10	8	8
Max. total (pairs)	7	19	23	9	14	2	10	15	10	9	9

Once an isolated male has found a mate, the advertising song is usually little used, and it seems likely that some of the individuals listed here were unmated passage birds.

**Woodlark** *Lullula arborea*

13 counties: 47-228 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** 7-95 pairs breeding.

CORNWALL Three localities: (1) one or two ♂♂ regularly from 23rd March to 25th May, but four on 5th April; (2)(3) singing ♂♂ on 22nd and 23rd March respectively.

DEVON Six localities: (1) five pairs located during breeding season; (2) five song-fighting in April, two adults and four juveniles in August; (3) singles on two dates; (4) singing individuals in May and June; (5) one pair probably bred, one pair possibly bred, and a third ♂ present but probably unpaired; (6) pair bred, fledging three young, and three other singing ♂♂.

DORSET Five localities: (1)-(3) pairs present during breeding season, but no proof of breeding; (4)(5) singles during breeding season in suitable habitat.

HAMPSHIRE Three broad localities: (1) 34-36 pairs present and assumed to be breeding; (2) 34 pairs present at 15 sites; (3) two or three pairs in breeding season. Allowing for incomplete coverage, it was thought that the population might total about 90 pairs.

SOMERSET One locality: one singing on 20th June (there had been county records of only two other singing Woodlarks in the previous ten years).

WILTSHIRE One locality: two singing on 10th May and pair in June.

**England, SE** 16 localities: 27-49 pairs breeding.

BERKSHIRE Six localities: (1) pair fledged four young at site on marginal farmland; (2) two, apparently a pair, on 29th March and 8th May; (3) pair on two dates in May; (4)(5) combined total of three or possibly four pairs during breeding season; (6) singles on 29th April and 29th May, two on 7th May.

KENT One locality: two on 7th June, not known if they were a pair.

SUSSEX One locality: one singing on 17th March.

SURREY Eight localities: (1) eight pairs breeding plus four unmated ♂♂; (2) nine pairs; (3) four pairs, of which one proved to breed; (4) three pairs bred; (5) three pairs, of which one proved to breed; (6) three pairs; (7) two pairs; (8) one pair.

**England, E** Four broad localities: 11-76 pairs breeding.

NORFOLK One broad locality: ten pairs proved to breed and an additional 16 pairs probably bred.

COUNTY NOT NAMED One locality: three on 30th March, ♂ singing plus two others to late July, family party of six on 3rd and 9th August.

COUNTY NOT NAMED Two broad localities: (1) 22 pairs, of which seven proved to breed; (2) 25-28 singing ♂♂.

The year 1986 is only the third for which the Panel has collected information. The totals are considerably up on those for 1985, but this is certainly in part due to increased fieldwork prompted by a BTO survey. The Panel acknowledges the special help of Chris Bowden.

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*

60 localities: 25-74 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** Four localities.

AVON Two localities: singing ♂ at two different localities, close enough together that same individual might have been involved.

CORNWALL One locality: juvenile seen on 9th September and pair with three juveniles on 14th September; if immigrants, they would have been the earliest ever, but this site was former breeding place.

DEVON One locality: pair prospecting nest holes on 10th May.

**England, SE** 44 localities: 15-54 pairs breeding.

ESSEX Two localities: (1) four pairs; (2) pair bred.

KENT One locality: family party on 19th July, two pairs on 6th August, two family parties on 31st August.

MIDDLESEX Seven localities: (1) two singing ♂♂ on 23rd June; (2) ♂ on 23rd July; (3) singing ♂ on 8th June and 6th July; (4) two singing ♂♂ in May and June; (5) singing ♂ on 22nd June; (6) ♂ singing in June; (7) pair, which may have bred, in July.

INNER LONDON 17 localities: (1) pair reared three young; (2) pair feeding young in late July and early August; (3) one carrying food into building on 29th May; (4)-(17) singing ♂♂ on dates in May, June and—some—July.

SURREY 14 localities: (1)-(3) pairs proved breeding; (4)-(7) pairs probably breeding; (8) six possible pairs breeding; (9) three possible pairs breeding; (10)-(14) single possible pairs breeding.

SUSSEX Three localities: (1)(2) pairs reared two and four young respectively; (3) singing ♂ on 1st May.

**England, E** Six localities: 4-7 pairs breeding.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE Two localities: (1)(2) singing individuals holding territories in April and May.

LINCOLNSHIRE/SOUTH HUMBERSIDE Three localities: (1) pair fledged four young in late May and second ♂ present in early June; (2) pair fledged broods of three on 23rd June and three on 6th August; (3) ♀ feeding young in nest on 6th August, fully grown juvenile nearby thought to be from earlier brood.

ELSEWHERE One locality: pair fledged three young and additional singing ♂ nearby.

**England, Central** Three localities: 2-4 pairs breeding.

DERBYSHIRE One locality: ♂ singing on three occasions, but not seen after 21st May.

STAFFORDSHIRE Two localities: (1) thought to be two pairs, both feeding young (site examined from a distance); (2) pair, estimated to have hatched young on 11th June.

**England, N** Three localities: 3-6 pairs breeding.

CLEVELAND One locality: pair with four eggs, from which at least two young fledged in mid July.

YORKSHIRE Two localities: (1) four pairs, one of which known to have fledged two broods; (2) pair with three or four young.



This species was dropped from the Panel's list after 1976 (*Brit. Birds* 71:

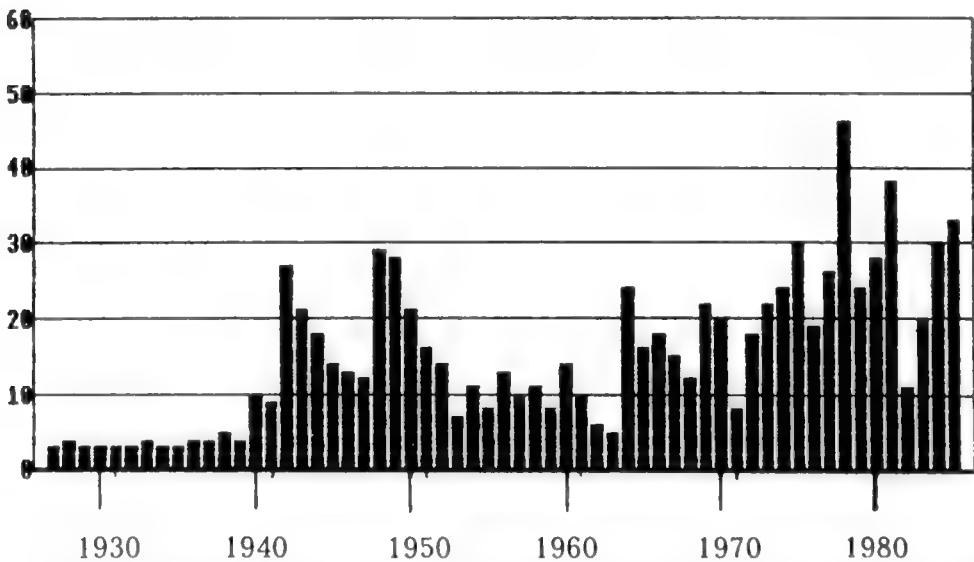


Fig. 2. Total number of pairs (proved breeding and not proved breeding) of Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros* in the London area during 1927-1985

13), but was restored in 1985, and we are delighted with the response from observers and recorders alike. The heartland remains in the Southeast, and the Panel is particularly indebted to Andrew Moon for providing a wealth of information as well as the histogram showing the fortunes of the species in the recording area of the London Natural History Society (fig. 2). The maximum possible total is significantly lower than that of 104 which Morgan & Glue reported for 1977 (*Bird Study* 28: 163-168), but it is possible that some recorders have not yet noticed the addition of the species to the Panel's list.

**Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris*

Two localities: two pairs breeding.

**England, N** One locality.

CUMBRIA One locality: adult with three juveniles, on 4th August and 3rd September.

**Scotland, N & W** One locality.

INVERNESS-SHIRE One locality: pair laid two clutches of five eggs, fledging one from the first and five from the second.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	11	6	3	6	5	6	7	10	4	2	2
Confirmed (pairs)	3	4	1	1	1	0	2	3	0	0	2
Possible (pairs)	9	2	3	5	4	6	5	9	4	2	0
Max. total (pairs)	12	6	4	6	5	6	7	12	4	2	2

The summertime appearance of the species is now very erratic, with no area being occupied in successive summers as they were a few years ago.

**Redwing** *Turdus iliacus*

32 localities: 20-46 pairs breeding.

**England, SE** One locality.

KENT One locality: two singles in June.

**England, E** One locality.

SUFFOLK One locality: two ♂♂ singing in suitable breeding habitat in mid May.

**England, N** One locality.

CUMBRIA One locality: six together on 3rd July; the observer was unable to determine whether they were a family party or a group of non-breeding adults.

**Scotland, Mid** One locality.

GRAMPIAN One locality: pair on 26th April.

**Scotland, N & W** 28 localities.

INVERNESS-SHIRE Two localities: (1)(2) pair at each, both fledging five young.

SUTHERLAND 26 localities:(1)-(26) 18 pairs proved to be breeding and a further 21 for which proof of breeding not obtained.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	10	10	12	6	18	6	42	65	57	33	32
Confirmed (pairs)	3	2	3	2	7	4	30	17	31	11	20
Possible (pairs)	12	14	14	7	25	7	32	51	47	22	26
Max. total (pairs)	15	16	17	9	32	11	62	68	78	33	46

With the exception of Sutherland, where the Panel is indebted to an invaluable contribution from J. & C. F. Barrett, much less information than usual has been submitted to the Panel from Scotland so that the 'maximum total' probably understates the true population by an appreciable amount.

**Cetti's Warbler** *Cettia cetti*

79 localities: 4-173 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** 51 localities: 3-123 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Cornwall	4	0	5	5	10
Devon	10	0	21	11	32
Dorset	12	2	25	10	37
Hampshire	18	0	35	0	35
Somerset	7	1	8	0	9

**England, SE** Two localities: 1-4 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Kent	1	0	0	2	2
Elsewhere	1	1	1	0	2

**England, E** 24 localities: 0-44 pairs breeding.

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Norfolk	22	0	41	0	41
Suffolk	2	0	3	0	3

**Wales** One locality: one individual.

CARMARTHENSHIRE One locality: one singing from 4th April; possibly two singing towards the end of the year.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Counties	8	10	14	14	11	16	12	13	12	12	10
Confirmed (pairs)	8	13	30	46	19	56	29	90	78	58	4
Possible (pairs)	72	140	144	117	179	106	173	157	235	152	169
Max. total (pairs)	80	153	174	163	198	162	202	247	313	210	173

The decline of the Kent population—from a total of 80 pairs possibly breeding in 1981 to near extinction in 1986—is striking, and is probably due to a succession of winters with severe cold spells. The small Essex population also disappeared, and it would be interesting to know why the Norfolk birds seem to be less affected. Note the first presence in south Wales.

**Savi's Warbler** *Locustella luscinioides*

Nine localities: 1-12 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** Three localities: (1) one singing from 23rd to 27th June; (2)(3) singing ♂♂ heard during spring, presumed to be passage migrants.

**England, SE** One locality: ♂ singing from 1st April to 2nd June.

**England, E** Five localities: (1) one singing from at least 18th June to 25th June; (2) four ♂♂ singing; (3) ♂ singing; (4) pair bred, rearing two young; (5) ♂ singing during the first half of May, but not subsequently.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	8	13	15	15	14	8	11	12	10	8	9
Confirmed (pairs)	0	3	4	6	2	5	0	2	0	1	1
Possible (pairs)	9	23	24	24	27	10	18	15	12	9	11
Max. total (pairs)	9	26	28	30	29	15	18	17	12	10	12

An improvement in distribution, with the species present in six counties compared with only two in 1985, but it seems likely that at least half of them were overshooting migrants.

**Marsh Warbler** *Acrocephalus palustris*

18 localities: 12-28 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** Three localities.

HAMPSHIRE Two localities: (1)(2) singing ♂♂ from 14th to 25th June and from 29th June to 11th July respectively.

ISLE OF WIGHT One locality: ♂ singing from 28th to 30th May.

**England, SE** Seven localities in two counties: (1) two pairs reared total of seven young, laying dates being 31st May and 6th June; (2) two pairs, but not known whether they bred; (3) only one pair thought to be present during breeding season, rearing at least two young, but second nest found after end of breeding season; (4) ♂ singing on 12th June and seen again on 8th July; (5) ♂ singing from 16th to 18th June; (6) ♂ singing on 14th June; (7) ♂ singing from 8th to 13th June, two more singing on 26th June, with pair present from 8th June, seen carrying food on 9th July.

**England, E** Two localities.

LINCOLNSHIRE/SOUTH HUMBERSIDE One locality: ♂ singing in suitable habitat on 4th June.

SUFFOLK One locality: ♂ singing on 1st June (first county record of the species).

**England, Central** Five localities: 7-9 pairs breeding.

WORCESTERSHIRE Five localities: (1) five pairs bred; (2)(3) single pairs bred; (4)(5) unpaired singing ♂♂ in June.

**Wales** One locality: one individual.

ANGLESEY One locality: ♂ singing on 15th and 16th June.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	5	6	15	15	8	3	8	10	12	9	15
Confirmed (pairs)	0	2	4	1	2	0	2	3	4	2	5
Possible (pairs)	5	9	11	22	10	3	7	9	9	7	14
Max. total (pairs)	5	11	15	23	12	3	9	12	13	9	19

The table excludes data from Worcestershire, which for many years has been the stronghold of the species in England, but where there is now a prolonged and serious decline. On the Continent, the species is, however, extending its range, and this may account for the slight increase elsewhere in England.

**Dartford Warbler** *Sylvia undata*

Five counties: 15-308 pairs breeding.

**England, SW**

CORNWALL At least three territories located and young seen in each.

DEVON Present throughout the year on three commons, and successful breeding took place at all three localities, with a total of four pairs reported.

DORSET Total of 76 pairs located during breeding season. It is known that four pairs bred successfully and in addition many sites reported 'good breeding season' or 'many young seen'.

HAMPSHIRE In the main extensive area, the sample of pairs reported made it possible to estimate a total population for the area of about 200 pairs, or much as in 1985. Elsewhere in the county, five pairs or singing ♂♂ located in one area and one pair bred at another site.

**England, SE**

SURREY Five localities: (1) six pairs, four known to have young; (2) six pairs, at least one of which bred; (3) five pairs, two of which were proved to breed; (4) two pairs; (5) one pair.

Severe winter weather seems to have taken a considerable toll of the Surrey population, but left the southwestern populations relatively intact.

**Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapillus*

19 localities: 1-29 pairs breeding.

**England, SW** Two localities: five apparently unmated ♂♂.

HAMPSHIRE Two localities: (1) four singing ♂♂; (2) one singing ♂.



**England, SE** Fifteen localities: 1-21 pairs breeding.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Two localities: (1) two singing ♂♂ in a regularly occupied site; (2) five territories, and one family party seen.

ESSEX Three localities: (1) pair, the ♂ singing; (2)(3) single singing ♂♂ during May and June.

KENT One locality: pair and additional ♂ on 24th May.

SURREY Seven localities: (1) one or two singing ♂♂; (2)-(7) single singing ♂♂, but known that one did not remain in the locality.

SUSSEX Two localities: (1) singing ♂ on 2nd June; (2) agitated individual on 8th June.

**England, E** One locality: one possible pair.

HUNTINGDON One locality: ♂ singing and duller individual, presumed to be ♀, in suitable breeding area on 2nd May.

**England, Central** One locality: one individual.

LEICESTERSHIRE One locality: ♂ singing on one day in mid June, not found on subsequent visits.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	15	12	7	25	30	35	21	75	47	24	19
Confirmed (pairs)	4	2	1	9	7	15	4	6	4	5	1
Possible (pairs)	24	29	10	64	71	87	40	169	78	41	28
Max. total (pairs)	28	31	11	73	78	102	44	175	82	46	29

A continued steep decline from the peak numbers of 1983.

**Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus***

13 localities: 5-16 pairs breeding.

**England, SE & E** 12 localities: (1) alarm calls on 15th and 29th June; (2) singing ♂ on 22nd June; (3) pair with young; (4)-(6) singing ♂♂ holding territory; (7) two pairs with nests, one with young; (8)(9) single pairs with broods of four; (10) at least three pairs present and probably bred; (11) pair probably bred; (12) singing ♂ on 2nd July.

**Wales** One locality: one individual.

ANGLESEY One locality: ♂ singing on 26th June.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	11	16	14	17	17	13	12	14	10	12	13
Confirmed (pairs)	7	6	7	3	2	4	3	2	4	4	5
Possible (pairs)	16	15	21	27	26	22	18	19	13	11	11
Max. total (pairs)	23	21	28	30	28	26	21	21	17	15	16

Apart from local habitat loss, the chief threat is probably undue disturbance by birdwatchers.

**Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio***

Six localities: 4-6 pairs breeding.

**England, E** Six localities: (1) pair laid five eggs and fledged two young; (2) pair bred, fledging four young from six eggs; (3) pair present late in breeding season, but no evidence of any young being reared; (4) pair probably bred, but nest may have been raided by predator; (5) pair laid five eggs, but abandoned nest; (6) ♂ held well-defined territory from 14th to 30th July, but no sign of any female.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Counties	5	13	11	10	5	6	3	3	4	6	3
Confirmed (pairs)	3	48	13	14	23	11	5	11	6	6	4
Possible (pairs)	22	16	24	38	8	29	3	1	4	5	2
Max. total (pairs)	25	64	37	52	31	40	8	17	10	11	6

The protracted decline of the species is accelerating and perhaps nothing short of an input of new blood can save the species from extinction in Britain.



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**Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla*

One locality: one individual.

**Scotland, S** One locality.

**BORDERS** One locality: ♂ feeding in mixed flock of finches on 2nd August: the fourth consecutive year that a Brambling has been seen in summer in the same general area.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	0	2	2	3	3	1	10	8	10	3	1
Confirmed (pairs)	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	1	0	0
Possible (pairs)	0	3	2	3	4	0	8	7	8	1	1
Max. total (pairs)	0	3	2	4	4	1	10	8	9	3	1

A second consecutive poor year.

**Serín** *Serinus serinus*

Two localities: three individuals.

**England, SW** One locality.

**DEVON** One locality: two ♂♂ from 24th April to mid August, but no sign of a ♀, the first break after five successful years.

**England, SE** One locality.

**KENT** One locality: ♂ singing on 1st July, but no suggestion of breeding.

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. localities	2	0	4	0	1	3	5	7	4	4	2
Confirmed (pairs)	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	2	2	1	0
Possible (pairs)	2	0	3	0	1	4	6	5	3	4	3
Max. total (pairs)	2	0	4	0	1	6	7	7	5	5	3

A poor year after five which encouraged one to believe that the species was established as a regular breeder. In the light of the enormous extension of range on the Continent, it would appear that the water barrier of the English Channel tends to inhibit movement into Britain.

**Scarlet Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrínus*

Five localities: five individuals.

**England, E** One locality.

**LINCOLNSHIRE/SOUTH HUMBERSIDE** One locality: ♀ or immature on 23rd June in habitat typical of that occupied by the species in Scandinavia.

**Wales** One locality.

**GWYNEDD** One locality: singing ♂ on 7th June.

**Scotland, N and W** Three localities: (1) ♂ singing from 28th June into July, the second consecutive year at this locality; (2) ♂ in song from 14th June to 14th July; (3) ♂ singing in suitable habitat, but no date mentioned.

The species is occurring with greater frequency in spring, but the only confirmed breeding to date was in 1982.

**Snow Bunting** *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Two localities: 1-2 pairs breeding.

**Scotland, N & W** Two localities: (1) ♂ singing repeatedly and joined by ♀; (2) ♀ feeding on summit on 1st May.

This is all the information submitted to the Panel, and can hardly be complete. We would appreciate any records of this species seen in the mountains between May and August.

**Cirl Bunting** *Emberiza cirrus*

Three counties: 13-62 pairs breeding.

**England, SW**

CORNWALL Two localities: (1) two ♂♂ on 26th May, then regularly to 26th July, but no proof of breeding; (2) ♂ feeding juvenile.

DEVON An estimated 45-50 pairs, representing little change from 1985 situation; proof of breeding obtained for at least 12 pairs, and majority assumed to have done so.

SOMERSET Six localities: (1) up to three ♂♂ singing regularly between 3rd May and 22nd July, with four on 11th June; (2) two ♂♂ singing on 23rd May; (3)-(6) single ♂♂ singing on single dates.

The much diminished population now seems to be confined to southwestern England, yet last century the species occurred as far north as Cumberland and even 50 years ago was widely distributed along the north coast of Wales.

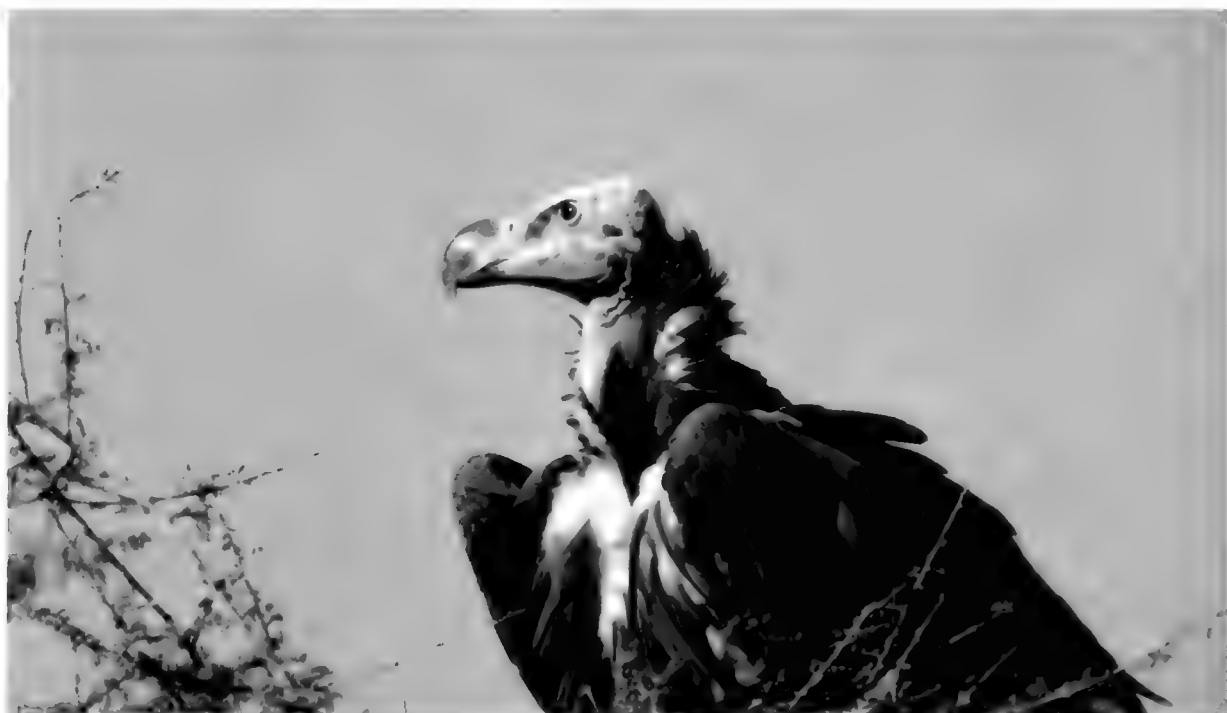
*Rare Breeding Birds Panel, Iredale Place Cottage, Loweswater, Cockermouth, Cumbria*  
CA13 0SU

## PhotoSpot

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### 26. Lappet-faced Vulture

The Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus* is the largest raptor in the Western Palearctic, slightly bigger than both the Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus* and the Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*. The English name stems from the skin folds on the back of the head, which is totally naked, without any feathering, and has a rather square shape. The front part of the neck is also almost bare, while the back is encircled with a pale brown collar of feathers. Its wings are wide and long, and are not raised in a V in flight.



[The inclusion of plates 211 and 212 in colour has been subsidised by a donation from ZEISS West Germany]



211 & 212. Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus*, Israel, June 1987 (H. Shirihai)

The trailing edge has an S-shape, and the tail is shortish and slightly pointed. The slow and 'soft' flight is like a film in slow motion.

The genus *Torgos* is monotypic. The three different forms are currently regarded as races:

- (1) *T. t. tracheliotus*, from South Africa to Ethiopia (south of the Sahara);
- (2) *T. t. nubicus*, in parts of northeast Africa and scattered in the Sahara; and
- (3) *T. t. negevensis*, found in the Arava and Negev in Israel.

*T. t. negevensis* is in danger of extinction. A population may, however, exist in Saudi Arabia and Jordan, where identification of the subspecies is not yet confirmed.

The head and nape of the Israeli form are various shades of brown, grey and cream, and the skin folds are small and in some cases non-existent. When excited, however, the skin folds at the back of the head blush.

The African race *tracheliotus* has much more noticeable skin folds, which are a deep red most of the time. In flight, this form shows a clear white stripe along its wing-coverts and white spots on its flanks and breast. The form *negevensis* has no wing-stripe, but a scattering of spots along its wing (which at times may look like an interrupted stripe); the spots on the flanks and body are mostly smaller and are brown/cream-coloured. At a distance, some adults may look like Black Vulture. In general, the adult *negevensis* resembles a juvenile *tracheliotus*. The race *nubicus* is intermediate between the other two forms, but is closer to *tracheliotus*. There has been some discussion concerning recognition of *negevensis* as a separate species.

HADORAM SHIRIHAI

Israeli Rarities Committee, Box 4168, Eilat 88102, Israel

## Mystery photographs

**135** The prominent perch of last month's mystery bird is a good clue to its identity, and the stocky appearance and hooked bill confirm that it is a shrike *Lanius*. The general uniformity of the upperparts, and the conspicuous dark subterminal crescents on the wing-coverts are features shown by the immatures of all the Western Palearctic species (including Brown Shrike *L. cristatus*, which has recently been accepted for





inclusion on the British and Irish list), except the obviously pied Great Grey *L. excubitor* and Lesser Grey *L. minor*. The tail is not noticeably long, and is certainly not long enough for Long-tailed Shrike *L. schach*.

The outer scapulars are slightly paler than the inner scapulars and mantle, but not so strikingly pale as on Woodchat *L. senator* and Masked Shrikes *L. nubicus*. These latter species also typically have a conspicuous pale area at the base of the primaries, contrasting with the dark primary coverts (but beware the *badius* race of Woodchat Shrike from Corsica, Sardinia and the Balearics, which lacks this feature). Woodchat Shrike is further ruled out by the mystery bird's relatively narrow pale tertial fringes and the suggestion of a mask, caused by the darker lores and upper ear-coverts.

It is one of three species: Red-backed *L. collurio*, Isabelline *L. isabellinus* or Brown, the immatures of which are all rather plain. The ground colour of the upperparts appears to be fairly uniform, lacking the contrast between the mantle and the rump and tail which is shown by most Isabelline Shrikes. In addition, the conspicuous barring on the mantle is typical of immature Red-backed, but shown by only some juvenile Isabellines. A final clincher is the obvious, contrastingly pale fringe to the tail, which is a feature never shown by Isabelline. Brown Shrike is more difficult to eliminate from a black-and-white photograph, but the apparently square-ended, rather than narrow and graduated tail, and the relatively small head and bill all suggest Red-backed.

It is indeed a juvenile Red-backed Shrike, and was photographed by Dr R. J. Chandler in Kent in September 1983.

TIM INSKIPP

214. Mystery photograph 136. Identify the species. Answer next month



# Monthly marathon

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It was not easy to judge scale in plate 159, which helps to explain the range of answers:

Black Redstart <i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	(46%)
Redstart <i>P. phoenicurus</i>	(27%)
Fieldfare <i>Turdus pilaris</i>	(10%)
Black-throated Thrush <i>T. ruficollis</i>	(4%)
Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	(3%)

and a few votes each for Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*, White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis*, Blackstart *Cercomela melanura*, Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, Red-rumped Wheatear *O. moesta*, Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*, Swainson's Thrush *C. ustulatus*, Gray-cheeked Thrush *C. minimus*, Eye-browed Thrush *T. obscurus* and Song Thrush *T. philomelos*.

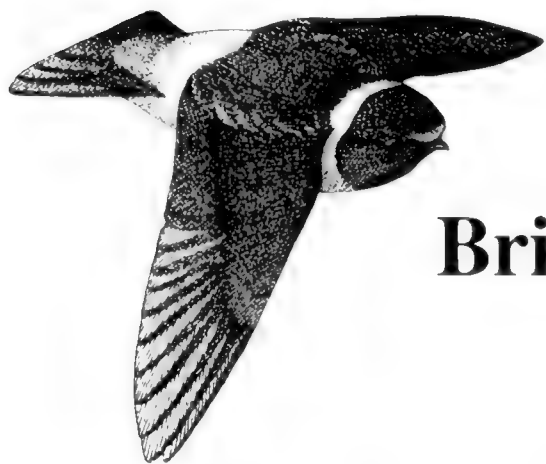
The most-popular choice was the correct one: it was a Black Redstart, photographed by Jon Hornbuckle in South Yorkshire in June 1987.

Anthony McGeehan got it right, so moves on to a nine-in-a-row, near-to-winning sequence: one more correctly named (plate 189) and he will be able to claim his SUNBIRD holiday in Africa, Asia or North America. If he fails with plate 189, however, this *second* competition will still continue, with plate 215 being number 17. There are currently nine competitors

**215.** Second 'Monthly marathon' competition. Photograph number 17. Identify the species. Read the rules on page 49 in the January 1988 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3XJ, to arrive by 15th October 1988



with sequences of five-in-a-row (Sebastian Buckton, D. R. Collins, Ken Hall, C. D. R. Heard, Martin Helin, Hannu Jännes, N. V. McCanch, Andrew Mackay and Pekka J. Nikander) and three with four-in-a-row (Martin S. Garner, Börje Mansén, and Mrs Jane Turner), all waiting to take over from Anthony McGeehan if he fails. On the other hand, if he succeeds, plates 200 and 215 will be numbers 1 and 2 in a *third* 'Monthly marathon' competition. Now is the time to send in YOUR entry.



## Cliff Swallow: new to Britain and Ireland

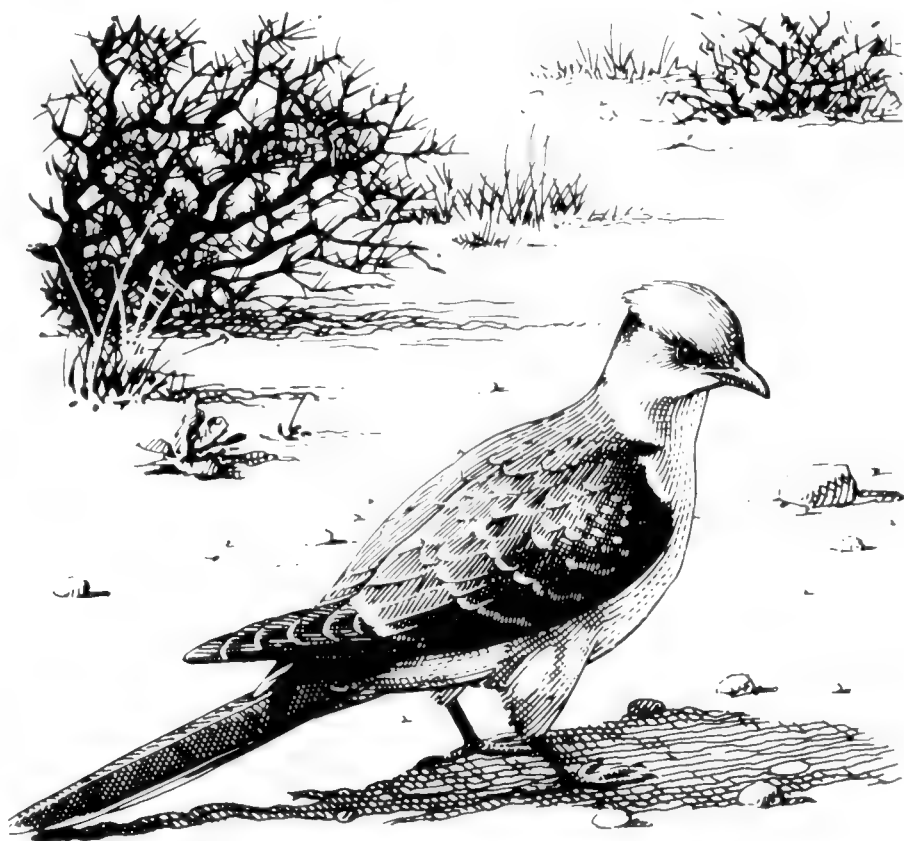
Michael J. Crosby

**D**uring the early afternoon of 10th October 1983, several people had brief views of an unusual hirundine on the islands of St Agnes and Gugh in the Isles of Scilly. Only Paul Vautrinot saw the bird well enough to make a detailed description, but it was of an unfamiliar species which he was unable to identify. Later in the afternoon, P. Morrison, M. Opie and D. N. Smith noticed a small flock of Swallows *Hirundo rustica* flying in off the sea on the eastern side of the Garrison, St Mary's. PM noticed that one bird in the flock was strikingly different in shape from the others, and had a pale orange-pink rump and collar. Their initial thought was that it must be a Red-rumped Swallow *H. daurica*, but, after better views of it circling overhead, they began to doubt this identification, and to consider the possibility of its being a hybrid. At this point, M. Andrew, R. E. Innes and I arrived. The swallow soon re-appeared, circled once overhead and settled on the roof of a building, where it perched (or, more accurately, lay exhausted with its wings drooped) for several minutes. As soon as I saw it, I realised that it was one of the species of swallow which I had seen in the USA in 1981, but what was its name? After a few minutes' recollection, I was able to identify it as a Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*.

The news spread quickly (and caused some confusion because many of the birders on the islands had never heard of this species), and by late afternoon a crowd of several hundred was enjoying excellent views of the swallow feeding low over the Garrison Wall. The following day, it moved to Lower Moors, and, during its stay, visited several parts of St Mary's, particularly favouring the Higher Moors and Longstones area. It was present until at least 27th October, and was closely observed and photographed (*Brit. Birds* 77: plates 14 & 15; 81: plate 216).

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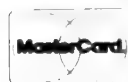
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217. Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*, Texas, USA, May 1980 (T. E. Bond)

Cliff Swallows and Cave Swallows are similar in size, shape and general coloration, but the head patterns of the two species are distinctly different in both adult and juvenile plumages. Adult Cliff Swallows have a black crown, blackish lores and a dark rufous or chestnut throat and 'face'. The forehead is white or pale buff on most of the northern races, but those of the races breeding in southwestern USA often have chestnut or brown foreheads. Juveniles are similar to adults, but are generally duller, and tend to have darker or duller foreheads and slightly paler throats, often with a few small white spots (like the Scilly bird). In the field, adults and juveniles both appear to have a dark head (including the throat), set off by the pale collar. Adult Cave Swallows have a black crown, a rufous-chestnut forehead and a pale buff throat and collar. Juveniles are duller, but very similar in head pattern, so both adults and juveniles appear in the field to have a blackish cap which contrasts sharply with the rest of the head. Cave Swallows also have rufous or rufous-chestnut rumps which are noticeably darker than those of Cliff Swallows. The head pattern and relatively pale rump of the Scilly bird clearly identify it as a Cliff Swallow.

The Cliff Swallow arrived in Scilly during a period of prolonged westerly winds, as a series of depressions tracked rapidly westwards across the Atlantic, the classic conditions for the arrival of vagrant North American landbirds. A Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus* and a Northern Parula *Parula americana* were found on St Agnes on the same day as the swallow, and during the following three days both Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* and Gray-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* were found on the islands.

### Acknowledgments

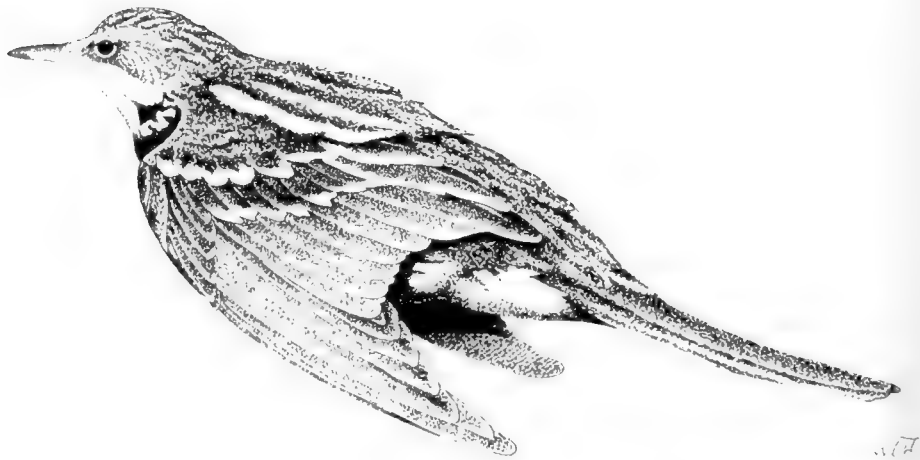
I am grateful to Kenn Kaufmann for his expert comments on this record, and to Jon Dunn for his advice, and for sending photocopies of several useful references.



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# Field identification of Pechora Pipit

*C. D. R. Heard and G. Walbridge*

**A**lthough there have been 29 accepted records of Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* for the United Kingdom up to the end of 1986, only three of these have been away from Shetland. It seems certain that more are occurring farther south, but escaping detection, and a lack of knowledge about the true field appearance of this species may well be perpetuating this situation. A recent record from Portland, Dorset (on 27th September 1983, see *Brit. Birds* 78: 566), revealed some confusion amongst record assessors over the identification criteria, and this paper has grown out of the clarification of the species' characteristics which was needed before that record was finally accepted. In order to confirm the plumage characters, we checked all the skins of Pechora Pipit in the British Museum (Natural History), Tring, for variations, and critically assessed a

sample of 35 for each identification feature. We also took the opportunity to examine skins of Red-throated Pipit *A. cervinus* (of which we also have extensive Palearctic field experience); this is the principal confusion species, with which we frequently make comparison. We have also assumed a degree of familiarity with Meadow *A. pratensis* and Tree Pipits *A. trivialis*: observers should also beware of the effects of moult on the plumage appearance, and apparent structure, of these species.

In the past, field guides and handbooks have usually stressed the similarity of Pechora Pipit to Tree Pipit, while ringers' texts have warned against confusion with Red-throated. In fact, Pechora Pipit has a very individual character, which can be obvious to experienced observers, a diagnostic call, and, as will be seen, a number of distinctive plumage features.

### Call

The initial detection of a migrant Pechora Pipit is most often a result of its call. Its importance as an identification feature has always been stressed, and rightly so. Migrant Pechoras can, however, often be silent (e.g. the individual on Fair Isle in 1977 did not call once during its five-day stay; see also King 1981). When it is heard, the most common call is a striking, hard and explosive monosyllable: 'pwit' or 'pit' (there is notable unanimity in transcriptions), which is usually loud and has a low-pitched, dry or rasping quality; it has been likened, by some, to a loud discordant Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* (GW; I. S. Robertson *in litt.*). It may be uttered two or three times, or in series, particularly when startled. It is quite unlike the call of any other European pipit; all have variants of the Meadow Pipit's 'pip, pip' anxiety note, but these are very different, having a sweet tone. Occasionally (in hard weather for instance), Meadow Pipits can give an abbreviated version of their normal 'tseep' call, but this is still typically squeaky. Other documented calls (which we have not heard ourselves) are a short, soft 'pit' (Riddiford & Ellis 1988), and a thin 'tzee' heard in winter quarters (e.g. Wassink 1986) and occasionally from North American vagrants. (For comparison with Red-throated Pipit calls, see table 2.)

### Structure and shape in flight

The Pechora Pipit is a small pipit, about the size of a Meadow Pipit, but slightly stouter-bodied (and bulkier in direct comparison). It can often adopt a rather upright stance, and the head may look sleek (distinctly so in the case of the Fair Isle bird of September 1977: CDRH; also I. S. Robertson *in litt.*)—an impression no doubt aided by its rather long, stout-based bill—and the eyes look large. The head of a Red-throated Pipit is more rounded, with the bill in proportion, along the lines of a Meadow Pipit.

When in flight, the bill still looks prominent, even recalling that of a Rock Pipit *A. petrosus* in outline, but, while the tail is in fact rather short (see table 1), it may not appear so, and the species tends to look streamlined, with the flight-action recalling that of Meadow Pipit. Pechora



218. Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*, Israel, November 1985 (Paul Doherty)



219. Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi*, China, May 1985 (Roger Beecroft)

does not look fat-bodied with a broad, very square-ended tail, which Red-throated Pipits often do. Contrary to a recent statement (*Brit. Birds* 79: 36), we both consider that Tree Pipit, *unlike* Red-throated Pipit, looks far more elongated in flight, its slim build accentuated by long wings and bounding undulations.

### Bill

Not only is the bill long and stout-based (again, see table 1), but it is also



220. Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*, Israel, November 1985 (Paul Doherty)



221. Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi*, China, May 1985 (Roger Beecroft)

distinctly bi-coloured. This is extremely hard to judge on museum specimens, but has been obvious on the three UK birds that we have seen (and in all descriptions and colour photographs). Pechora shows a mostly dark upper mandible, pinker towards the cutting edge, but with very extensive pink on the lower mandible, of which just the tip is dark. The bill of Red-throated Pipit is usually all-dark (with any horn or pinkish coloration restricted to the base of the lower mandible); the bills of some, however, can show extensive pink on the lower mandible (e.g. all three in Scilly in October/November 1984: CDRH).

### Legs and feet

While it would be dangerous to attach too much importance to leg



222. Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi*, China, May 1985 (Roger Beecroft)

Table 1. Measurements (in mm) of bill dimensions, hind-claw length and tail length of Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* and Red-throated Pipit *A. cervinus* (after Svensson 1984)

Attribute	Pechora Pipit	Red-throated Pipit
Bill length (from skull)	14.5 – 17.2	13.2 – 15.1
Bill width (at proximal edge of nostrils)	4.0 – 4.8	3.4 – 4.2
Bill depth (at proximal edge of nostrils)	3.8 – 4.5	3.3 – 3.9
Hind-claw length	8.5 – 12.0	9.0 – 13.0
Tail length	49 – 57	54 – 64

coloration, it appears, from descriptions, that the legs and feet of Pechora are consistently a pale flesh or shell-pink, whereas those of Red-throated Pipit vary from flesh through orange-pink to straw (usually being duller in spring).

**Plumage and seasonal variation**

The following description concentrates on details relevant to field identification and, unless stated otherwise, refers to autumn plumage, since this is the one which West European observers are most likely to encounter. Seasonal variation is, however, not great, relating mainly to the tone of the ground colours, while feather-wear may reduce the prominence of some markings. In general, individuals in spring are slightly lighter on the upperparts and more buff, especially on the underparts (one on Attu, in the Aleutian Islands, reminded American observers of a Savannah Sparrow *Ammodramus sandwichensis*: King 1981); while by mid summer they can be lighter still, taking on a greyer look to the upperparts. Those in autumn are more richly coloured, with a much darker reddish-brown tone above. There appears to be no substantial difference between first-winters and fresh-plumaged adults.

**Table 2. Comparison of field characters of Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* and Red-throated Pipit *A. cervinus* in non-breeding plumages**

Character	Pechora Pipit	Red-throated Pipit
STRUCTURE	Sleek head, with long bill; short tertials; about three primary tips project beyond longest tertial	Rounded head, with bill in proportion; little or no primary projection beyond tertials
FLIGHT SHAPE	Small and streamlined (long bill may be detectable)	Fat-bodied, with broad tail
BILL	Bi-coloured: upper mandible mostly dark, but pink at cutting-edge; lower mandible mostly pink or pink-orange, with dark only at tip	Mostly dark: horn or pinkish colour usually only at base of lower mandible, but may be more extensive (perhaps especially in late autumn)
LEGS AND FEET	Pale pink (thigh usually darker than rest of underparts)	Varies from pink to straw (thigh similar to underpart colour)
HEAD PLUMAGE		
Crown and nape	Warm brown or rufous-brown, heavily streaked (in lines) with black	Olive-grey or greyish-brown
Oral streak	Dark, well-defined	Usually little, but can be more marked
Malar stripe	Usually weak or broken, but can be better marked; may show additional spot at side of neck	Always heavy and well-defined; triangular base often extended to neck-sides, but no isolated spot there
Ear-coverts	Rufous-brown; streaked	Brown; uniform or barely streaked
UPPERPARTS		
Mantle	Rich reddish-brown; heavily streaked; two (or more) white to buffish-white 'braces'; long and heavily outlined in black	Greyish-brown or olive-brown; heavily streaked; two or more 'braces'; less white, shorter and less heavily outlined
Rump	Reddish-brown; heavily streaked with black	Paler, olive-brown or greyish-brown; slightly less heavily streaked
Tail	Narrower; outermost feathers appear white or whitish, but can be buff	Broader; outermost feathers always white or whitish
Median and greater coverts	Both thickly tipped white or cream, forming two conspicuous wing-bars	Neatly fringed whitish or buff, not forming separate or conspicuous wing-bars
UNDERPARTS		
Throat	Usually white	Washed buff or salmon-buff
Breast	White, often with distinct zone of yellowish-buff wash; fewer, but heavy, black streaks	Sullied white, with pale buffy-yellow or yellowish-olive tinge
Belly and vent	Mostly clean white; contrasts with yellowish-buff zone on breast (but both areas occasionally show yellowish-buff tinge); long black streaks down flanks	Sullied white (pale buffy-yellow or yellowish-olive tinge); undertail-coverts often buff; often equally long black streaks down flanks
CALLS	Diagnostic: usually loud and explosive 'pwit' or 'pit', uttered two or three times; also, short soft 'pit'; rarely, quiet thin 'tzee'	Akin to 'Tree Pipit's: sibilant, drawn-out, variously transcribed 'skee', 'skee-eez', 'ptzeez', 'pstee', 'sstee'; occasionally low 'chup' or stuttering 'pzou-pzou' (recalling Meadow Pipit's 'pip-pip')



223. Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi*, China, May 1985 (Geoff Carey)

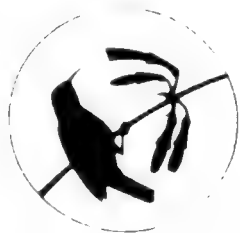


224. Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi*, China, May 1985 (Geoff Carey)

### Head

Like Red-throated Pipit, the head and upperparts of Pechora are heavily streaked with black, but, whereas Red-throated usually has an olive-grey or greyish-brown tone to the ground colour, this is a richer reddish-brown on Pechora. On those which we have seen, the head was a brighter, more rufous brown (than the rest of the upperparts); this was also the case in





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75% of the skins examined (though the head may merely be a lighter brown by mid summer). This rufous tinge is often most marked on the finely streaked ear-coverts (which tend to be more uniform on Red-throated Pipit). The crown is heavily streaked, often forming lines, with the nape-streaking less heavy, owing to the individual streaks being slightly finer and more widely spaced; this disagrees with Roberson (1980), but is clearly the case in 95% of skins and in photographs of live birds. This difference, in crown-versus-nape streaking, can be more marked on Red-throated Pipit, because of the lighter ground colour. There can be a quite distinct, but short, supercilium and rather paler area around the eye, usually broken by a shortish, dusky eye-stripe. The front part of the eye-stripe, on the lores, is reasonably distinct, and has been advanced as a useful separating character from Red-throated Pipit, which usually shows plain lores (Svensson 1984); some non-breeding Red-throated Pipits do, however, show a loreal streak (CDRH; S. C. Madge *in litt.*). The lores may, however, be hard to determine in the field (P. V. Harvey *in litt.*) and are often subject to wetting during normal feeding activity. The moustachial stripe is not quite so dark as on Red-throated Pipit, and both species show a long cream-coloured submoustachial stripe curving around onto the sides of the neck, where, on Pechora, it may help to isolate a black spot. First noted by King (1981), and more recently by Wassink (1986), the usefulness of this spot as an identification feature cannot be confirmed in recent British sightings (also see Riddiford & Harvey 1988); this may be because it is a seasonal feature (the above references were to individuals observed in winter or spring). When a similar feature has been observed on Meadow and Tree Pipits, it has most often been in spring (GW; see also Riddiford & Harvey 1988); but, in these cases, it has usually been produced by misalignment of feathers, and observers should beware of this possibility. On non-breeding Red-

225. Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*, Israel, October 1986 (Amoud B. van den Berg)



throated Pipits, the often-large triangular mark in this area is invariably attached to the heavy black malar stripe. The malar stripe on Pechora is often weak (and may be non-existent), especially near the chin, but can be more strongly marked on the lower throat. Like other pipits, however, notably Richard's Pipit *A. novaeseelandiae*, the strength of the malar stripe can vary a great deal, and some Pechoras do show a strong mark here.

### Mantle and rump

Pechora Pipits tend to look dark-and-striped above. This is partly the result of heavy black stripes on the upperparts generally, and obvious, long, pale 'braces' at the sides of the mantle. The brace markings (or 'tramlines') vary from pure white (especially in summer) to the bright cream (or buffish-cream) more typical in autumn, but are nearly always whiter and more contrasting (owing to heavier black stripes outlining them) and longer than the similar markings on Red-throated Pipits (of which those in spring come closest). A second pair of braces may be discernible outside these, but, if anything, such double tramlines are more likely on



226 & 227. Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi*, China, May 1985 (above, Roger Beecroft; below, Geoff Carey)



Red-throated Pipit, which often shows four, and even six, such marks. The important distinction is that on a Pechora the braces are usually longer (stretching the full length of the mantle in a broken 'V'), whiter, and more heavily outlined with black.

The rump, like the mantle, is heavily streaked with black on a reddish-brown ground, which can be a brighter, more rufescent brown on the uppertail-coverts. On Red-throated Pipit (the only other European pipit with a well-streaked rump), the streaks tend to be shorter, and more like spots, but may be more obvious because the ground colour is a paler greyish-brown or olive-brown, never inclining to rufous.

## Tail

Although buffish or smoky-buff outer tail feathers have previously been emphasised as the single most important plumage character, our experience does not confirm this. In field observations, most recent British Pechora Pipits appeared at first to have white or whitish outer tail feathers (and these can look *pure white*), although, on closer inspection, they could be seen to be a smoky-white or greyish-white. On museum specimens, the majority showed cream-coloured outer tail feathers rather than buff and, again, these would almost certainly have appeared white or whitish in the field; in direct comparison, however, those of neither Red-throated nor Pechora were as pure white as those of Meadow Pipit (for tail-pattern in the hand, see fig. 1).

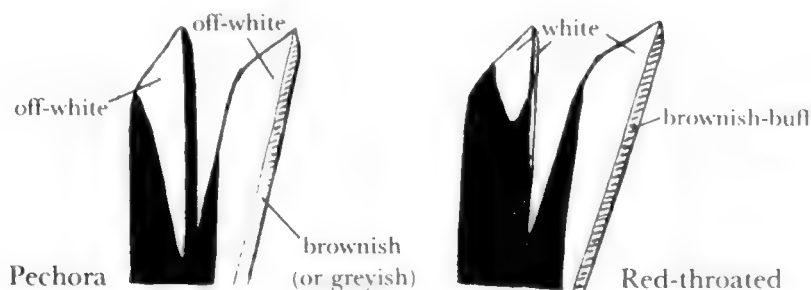


Fig. 1. Two outermost tail feathers of Pechora *Anthus gustavi* and Red-throated Pipits *A. cervinus*, showing differences in extent of white (or off-white) on penultimate feather

Thus, a distinction in the outer tail feather coloration may be apparent only when one already suspects a Pechora.

## Wings

The wing markings are likely to be the first plumage feature to strike West European observers. Pechora Pipits have two thick and well-defined white or whitish wing-bars formed by broad, pale tips to the greater and median coverts. They are usually of equal thickness and white, but the median-covert bar may be slightly thicker and cream-coloured or buffish-white (especially in autumn). The other European pipits (in fresh plumage) also have pale fringes to the wing-coverts, these being at their most marked on Red-throated Pipit, but a combination of features makes these far more prominent on Pechora. They have thicker and more clearly defined whitish tips, and darker feather-centres, with narrower lateral fringes.

making each wing-bar more discrete, and with a more solid dark bar separating the two pale bars. Comparing the skins of Red-throated and Pechora, this difference is obvious and consistent. In the past, this feature has largely been ignored, but in our experience it is one of the most immediate distinguishing features.

The tertials can also be well marked: dark grey-brown, with clear-cut buff to immaculate-white fringes (in skins, however, Red-throated often showed the more striking tertial fringes). More significantly, as shown by Dementiev & Gladkov (1969) and Svensson (1984), the tertials always fall well short of the wing-tip, making three or more primary tips visible on the closed wing. There is normally little or no primary projection on Red-throated Pipit, and it is only very short on Meadow and Tree Pipits (several of the fresh-plumaged Red-throated skins at Tring also showed two or more primaries projecting beyond the tertials, but this may have been due, at least partly, to the way that the specimens had been prepared). The primary tips can, however, be very hard to examine in the field (P. V. Harvey *in litt.*), though the rather shorter, less tapered look to the tertials may be easier to discern (N. J. Riddiford *in litt.*). Also, the tertials are particularly susceptible to wear, and consequently may be shorter than normal (particularly in spring): for a photographic example of this, see Campbell (1974: plate 627), in which both individuals of a breeding pair of Tree Pipits (which should show very little primary projection) show a number of primaries extending beyond their severely worn tertials. Despite these remarks, observers should always try to confirm the presence of this important structural feature.

### Underparts

Typically, the Pechora Pipit shows bright, unsullied white on the lower breast and belly, which may contrast slightly with a yellowish-buff wash across the upper breast. This buff may be limited in extent (the 1977 Fair Isle individual had just a pale buff patch in the centre of its breast, noticeable only when the bird was front-on, and the one in 1978 had none), but was present on at least 80% of the museum specimens (at its most reduced in July).

The throat and vent are also rather white, but both can show a slight buff tinge (perhaps most likely in spring, when the 'face' is often more buff). Red-throated Pipits (other than breeding adults) have underparts which are tinged uniform pale buffy-yellow or yellowish-olive, like those of Meadow Pipits, but often cleaner-looking, and invariably lack a distinct zone of brighter buff coloration across the breast, although a salmon-buff wash may be visible on the throat at close range.

The streaks on the underparts of Pechora Pipit fall into two groups: thick, well-spaced, black streaks (or stripes) down the breast, and an extension of longer streaks down the flanks. The breast streaks tend to be fewer, but heavier, than the more closely streaked breast of Red-throated Pipit, while the flank streaks are, if anything, longer.

### Behaviour

Despite the distinctive call and well-marked plumage characters noted



above, one behavioural trait may still hinder identification. This species does like to skulk, often in quite thick vegetation. On Fair Isle, they favour standing crops or stubble, and the rankest of grass, from which they can be extremely difficult to flush. Once flushed, however, they may perch on fence-wires or posts and give extended views.

## Conclusion

Observers faced with a silent putative Pechora Pipit which does not show buff outer tail feathers need not be disheartened. The characteristic double white wing-bar should be easy to see, as well as the strong black stripes and prominent pale braces on the mantle. Careful attention should be paid to plumage tones, structure and bare-part coloration. If heard, the call-note is conclusive. (For a detailed comparison with Red-throated Pipit, consult table 2.)

## Acknowledgments

We should like to thank M. J. Rogers for providing GW with material from the Rarities Committee's files; D. K. Reid and P. R. Colston for allowing CDRH access to the British Museum (Natural History) skin collection at Tring; Martyn Butler for the use of his word-processor; and Geoff Carey for the use of his excellent photographs. Thanks are also due to Nick Riddiford and Iain Robertson, who commented extensively on the penultimate draft; and to the following who provided help or useful comments: R. J. Johns, A. R. Dean, and Keith Vinicombe.

## Summary

In the past, field identification of Pechora Pipits *Anthus gustavi* has focused too closely on features more easily determined in museum specimens. It is, in fact, not a difficult species to identify: it possesses a unique call and several distinct structural features. It also shows obvious white wing-bars; rather reddish-brown upperpart coloration, brightest on the head; prominent long whitish braces on the mantle; and very white underparts, with a yellowish-buff wash mid-breast. The outer tail feathers do not necessarily look buffish.

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# Rarities Committee

## news and announcements

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### *P. G. Lansdown and the Rarities Committee*

Committee membership is listed on the inside front cover each month, and on the back of the title page. In the absence of further nominations (*Brit. Birds* 80: 421-423), Steve Gantlett and Rob Hume started their terms of membership on 1st April 1988, replacing Peter Grant and Steve Madge. Peter Grant had retired from the Committee in December 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 22, 251, 422) and Steve Gantlett had been co-opted to replace him from 1st January 1987, whilst Steve Madge retired as the longest-serving member on 31st March 1988. Peter Grant's outstanding contribution to the work of the Committee has already been acknowledged (*Brit. Birds* 80: 22, 422). Steve Madge, who served for 11

228. British Birds Rarities Committee annual meeting, Bedfordshire, April 1988: left to right, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (Managing Editor), J. H. Marchant, A. R. Dean, D. J. Britton, I. S. Robertson, S. J. M. Gantlett, P. G. Lansdown (Chairman), Alan Brown, R. A. Hume, P. R. Colston (Museum Consultant) and M. J. Rogers (Hon. Secretary); T. P. Inskipp, S. C. Madge and K. E. Vinicombe were unable to attend this meeting (*Erika Sharrock*)



years, the first one as a co-opted member, has been a stalwart of the Committee. His considerable identification expertise and ability to express his knowledge on paper in an instructive yet modest manner, which have been features of his term on the Committee, will continue to benefit *British Birds*, for he remains a member of the Identification Notes Panel.

The following points of interest arise from the Committee's annual meeting at Blunham, Bedfordshire, on 7th May 1988.

### **The right to submit a record to the Rarities Committee**

For many years, we have requested that observers send their rare bird records via the appropriate county or regional recorder (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 80: 489, 516), and we reaffirm that policy. There is, however, an increasing trend that certain records (some of those rejected at county or regional level) are not being forwarded to us. Since all rare bird records intended for the Committee are contributions to *British Birds* magazine, it is quite wrong for any not to arrive, since they are sent to us in good faith *via* the recorder. The only exception should be when, after discussion with the recorder, an observer agrees that his or her submitted record should not be forwarded to us. So, we strongly urge observers to continue to submit records to the Rarities Committee via the appropriate recorder and, at the same time, request that recorders do not break the faith placed in them by individual observers.

### **Election of new member**

The Committee's nominee for the next vacancy, which will arise on or before 31st March 1989, from resignation or the longest-serving member's automatic retirement, is C. D. R. Heard. Chris is an experienced and highly respected birdwatcher who is well known to the Rarities Committee through his careful observations and thorough submissions of rarity occurrences. He lives in Maidenhead, Berkshire, is widely travelled in the Western Palearctic, and has visited Iran, Kenya, Thailand and the USA.

As usual, we invite other nominations, which should be sent to me by 31st December 1988. If further nominations are received, a postal election will take place, in which county and regional recorders and bird observatories will be entitled to vote.

*P. G. Lansdown, 197 Springwood, Llanedeyrn, Cardiff CF2 6UG*

## **Seventy-five years ago...**

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'VARIATION IN TONGUE-SPOTS OF NESTLING SKYLARK. WHEN, in 1907 (*cf. Ibis*, 1907, p. 574), I drew attention to the tongue-marks found in the young of certain Passerine birds, I was under the impression that the pattern of these ornamentations was always fixed, and a constant character in the species that possessed them. This, however, is apparently not the case . . . COLLINGWOOD INGRAM' (*Brit. Birds* 7:115, September 1913)



**Peregrines repeatedly attacking stationary Buzzard** R. I. Kinley and D. B. Thexton (*Brit. Birds* 78: 193) recorded a pair of Peregrines *Falco peregrinus* persistently mobbing a Buzzard *Buteo buteo* and apparently striking it while in the air. On 2nd April 1985, in southern Meirionnydd, Powys, I was observing the display flight of a male Peregrine when a Buzzard flew in to its craggy nest site some 300 m west of the falcons' nest. The female Peregrine left her perch on a branch above the eyrie and stooped on the Buzzard, which landed on a small grassy cliff ledge within a steeply hanging oakwood. The male Peregrine then joined the attack and stooped on the Buzzard 23 times in the space of two minutes: rising about 20 m above it, closing his wings and flashing through the trees, he raked the Buzzard's back on two occasions; in the remaining attacks, the Buzzard lay on its back with claws extended, unable to move. I have often seen interactions between Peregrines and Buzzards, but never any with such ferocity on the part of the falcons.

ROGER Q. SKEEN

*Bronwydd, Bridge Street, Corris, near Machynlleth, Powys SY20 9SS*

**Wood Sandpipers using tail-pattern as visual signal in aggressive encounters** During 1st-4th August 1984, on a sewage-farm at Jastarnia, on the Hel Peninsula, northern Poland, we watched the behaviour of four Wood Sandpipers *Tringa glareola*, each of which defended its own feeding territory which consisted of a 3-4 m length of muddy bank. The waders often fought at the boundaries of their territories and demonstrated threat postures, the presentation of the tail-pattern being the most striking element. The exact posture depended on the distance and physical position of the intruder. If the intruder approached to the side of a territory-owner, the latter bowed, dropped one wing, spread its tail and tilted it towards the intruder (plate 229; see also *BWP* 3: 582); in many cases, this posture was enough to end the conflict and for the intruder to retreat. If the approach was to a short distance in front of the territory-owner, however, the latter adopted another posture, with wings spread and tail

229. Wood Sandpipers *Tringa glareola*, Poland, August 1984 (*Ireneusz Chojnacki*)



raised (plates 230 & 231); such encounters occasionally resulted in a violent fight, the attack usually being from the side (plate 232), only rarely from above (plate 233).

The two types of tail demonstration were given also by other species of wader in non-territorial encounters. The tail-patterns are visual signals in aggressive conflicts, and serve to suppress aggression. There is a hypothesis that visual stimuli by waders are comprehensible also to other wader species, because many species that feed in common



230 & 231. Wood Sandpipers *Tringa glareola*, Poland, August 1984 (Ireneusz Chojnacki)





232 & 233. Wood Sandpipers *Tringa glareola* defending feeding territories and demonstrating tail-pattern in aggressive encounters, Poland, August 1984 (Ireneusz Chojnacki)



assemblages have similar tail-and-rump patterns, and aggressive behaviour is similar and ritualised (Stawarczyk, 1984, *Ornis Scand.* 15: 23-27).

IRENEUSZ CHOJNACKI and TADEUSZ STAWARCZYK  
*Przybyszewskiego 50 m.6, 60-357 Poznan, Poland;*  
*Museum of Natural History, Wrocław University, Sienkiewicza 21,*  
*50-335 Wrocław, Poland*

**Dark neck spot of Pechora Pipit** King (1981) and Wassink (1986) have stressed the value of an isolated round dark spot on the sides of the neck at the juncture of the white throat and the buffish breast in identifying Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi*. This feature is supposedly particularly pronounced when an individual stretches its neck or turns its head.

NR and PH have been fortunate in observing, on Fair Isle, Shetland, four and three Pechoras respectively (three in September 1985, one in October 1986). At no time did we note this feature, nor, to our knowledge, did other observers refer to it. All four individuals showed heavy bold streaks or blotches across the entire breast, and the only one showing obvious concentrations at the sides of the neck was described as having very strong, distinct, dark triangles at the base of barely discernible malar stripes; yet a triangular spot has been described as a character of Red-throated Pipit *A. cervinus* (Wassink 1986).

We have observed other pipits, particularly Meadow *A. pratensis*, in situations where neck-craning, turning the head, or mere ruffling of feathers in windy conditions can change the evenness of breast streaking; in such circumstances, isolated round dark spots can be apparent.

This feature is, in our view, potentially misleading and certainly should not be considered vital for the identification of Pechora Pipit, particularly when other, more constant, characters exist (Heard & Walbridge 1988).

NICK RIDDIFORD and PAUL HARVEY  
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WASSINK, A. 1986. Plumage and behaviour of Pechora Pipit on its wintering grounds. *Dutch Birding* 8: 141-143.

**Calls of Pechora Pipit** Comparison of various field guides and identification notes and papers reveals some confusion over the call of Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi*. All agree that the call is distinct from those of other European pipits, including Meadow Pipit *A. pratensis*, and it is usually described as 'Pit' or 'Pwit', but there is no consensus regarding whether the call is soft or hard, quiet or loud. Indeed, the contradictory nature of these transcriptions was debated by Kenneth Williamson as far back as 1953 (*Fair Isle Bird Obs. Bull.* 9: 24-27). Based on our experience of four individuals on Fair Isle, Shetland, we hope to clarify the situation.

Pechora Pipits may, in fact, have more than one call; we have identified three distinct, but similar calls, and one of these may not have been previously recorded.

**CALL A** Short, soft 'Pit', given as single note, often two or three times in succession. Shorter than all Meadow Pipit call notes, except some anxiety notes. Lower-pitched and distinct from any other West Palearctic pipit of our experience. In field-notes, we have described this call as soft, quiet or fairly quiet; and it can easily be drowned if pipits of other species are calling nearby.

CALL B Short, dry 'Pwit', given only as single note. Probably as short as call A, but both louder and more forceful (but still quiet); and may appear longer owing to its notable dryness and relative volume.

CALL C Loud, sharp or hard, generally three-note flight-call, transcribed as 'Tsip-tsip-tsip' or 'Pswit pswit-pswit', vaguely recalling flight-calls of Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* or, more particularly, Grey Wagtail *M. cinerea*. Each note is monosyllabic and clearly differentiated. This three-note call is generally repeated, but with pauses between each call.

The loud, strong 'Pwit' flight-call described by Williamson may have been a loud version of call B, but was probably a single-note version of call C.

Each call is quite distinct from those of other pipits occurring in Britain or Ireland, but, unfortunately, to judge from our experience on Fair Isle, Pechora is the most silent of pipits on migration, and may be watched for long periods before uttering any sound. Fair Isle individuals tended to give call A immediately on taking flight, particularly towards dusk, or when flushed with (rather more anxious) Meadow Pipits, but even then were more often silent.

The only individual heard to utter call B did so on rising from an oat field (it was later heard to give call A). This appeared to draw up another Pechora Pipit from a different part of the field; call B may, therefore, be a contact call.

Call C may also be a contact call; it was given by one individual in flight, and again by the two pipits after they had risen from the oat field. These continued this wagtail-like call until they had joined together in flight and chosen a direction.

It might be added that the species' general silence may be a useful identification feature: any heavily marked, silent pipit would certainly merit investigation.

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**Tongue spots of nestling Olivaceous Warblers** Of the many reference books which we have consulted, only G  roudet (1963) and Harrison (1975) mention the number of black spots on the tongue of nestling Olivaceous Warblers *Hippolais pallida*, and both agree that there are two. Throughout a study on the breeding biology of this species, carried out in the Province of M  laga in Spain during 1982-83, we have checked more than 20 nests containing nestlings, all of them showing a three-spotted gape (plate 234).

Examining the original literature, we found that only Payn (1948) had noticed the existence of three spots, while Greaves (1936) and Simmons (1952), and after them nearly all subsequent authors referring to this species, stated the existence of just two dots. The latter two authors made their observations in Egypt, where the nominate subspecies *H. p. pallida* breeds; Payn's observations, on the other hand, referred to Tunisia and Northern Algeria, within the breeding area of *H. p. opaca*, the race which also inhabits the Iberian Peninsula (Vaurie 1959). No reference concerning this characteristic has been found in the literature for the other races: *H. p. reiseri* (Sahara); *H. p. plaeneri* (A  r & Chad); *H. p. elaeica* (eastern Europe & the Middle East).





This difference in the number of tongue spots is to be added to other dissimilarities between *pallida* and *opaca*, related to size, colour, and bill length (Williamson 1960) and even song (Géroudet 1963). These peculiarities may justify a revision of the taxonomic status of these forms.

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234. Nestling Olivaceous Warblers  
*Hippolais pallida opaca* showing tongue  
spots, Spain, June 1982 (J. C. Rey)

## Letters

**'Points of view'** I read with interest the recent correspondence in *British Birds* on 'conservation' and the extent to which this is or should be included in your journal (*Brit. Birds* 80: 582-583). Perhaps many of your readers may not realise that the National Trust owns a greater area of land with SSSI status than does the RSPB, the Woodland Trust or the combined county trusts. In total, almost one-third of our 220,000 ha is so designated.

H. JOHN HARVEY

Chief Adviser on Conservation & Woodlands, The National Trust, Spitalgate Lane,  
Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 2DE

**Identification of Purple Heron** My photograph of a Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* in flight (*Brit. Birds* 78: 101, plate 44) does show an elevated, not trailing, hind toe indistinguishable from that of Grey Heron *A. cinerea* except for its longer extension. This is even more clearly shown in the original print (which the editors of *British Birds* have examined) and accurately depicted in volume I of *BWP*.

It would seem, therefore, that the position of the hind toe in flight cannot be used as a valid identification feature, as A. A. Bell tentatively suggested in his letter (*Brit. Birds* 80: 118).

BRIAN THOMAS

8 Southfield Road, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol 9, Avon

Mr Thomas's conclusion was also reached by P. G. Lansdown (*in litt.*, December 1985, October 1986). EDS

**Open-country birds** Now that we tend to drive by car, even to our 'local patch', whereas in the past we might have cycled or, in the more distant past, have walked, are we missing many birds, especially the elusive, open-ground-frequenting species?

The Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax* reported during December 1987 to January 1988 was the first discovered in Britain for some 12 years, but how many have we missed because we scan or traverse open fields less often?

DAVE NURNEY

46 Wellington Road, Binstead, Isle of Wight PO33 3QR

**Black-throated and white-throated Black-eared Wheatears in Spain** In his excellent paper on the field identification of West Palearctic wheatears (*Brit. Birds* 80: 137-157, 187-238), Peter Clement stated for Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* that 'in Spain, Portugal and Morocco (race *hispanica*), white-throated males are more common than black-throated'. There is, however, local variation.

Between 1974 and 1987, in hilly and steppe areas near to the Ebro Valley (between the south slopes of the Pyrenean foothills and the north slopes of the Iberian mountains), Spain, I ringed 98 males, and made field counts of the forms. Black-throated males comprised 65.3% of the total ringed, and 60.13% of the 923 individuals counted.

The ratio of the two forms was unchanged over this period, but the numbers recorded in field counts had dropped to 53.3-57.1% of the 1982 level by 1986. This reduction can not be accounted for by changing land-use practices in the area.

A. ARAGÜÉS

Pedro Maria Ric, 3, 5°. C 50008-Zaragoza, Spain

**BOU list of name changes** I should like to comment at once on this (*Brit. Birds* 81: 353-374; *Ibis* 130: supplement) and to say at the outset that this is a superior document. The BOU has shown great foresight in attempting to bring many of their names into international conformity. For the greater part, I agree entirely; I shall comment in detail, as requested, separately. Despite any such criticism, let me say that I regard this as a 'Great leap for mankind' in the realm of bird names. I

am delighted at the progress. I now think that everyone is going to get together worldwide to a degree once thought impossible. My hat's off to the British group.

BURT L. MONROE, JR  
Chairman, AOU Checklist Committee, Department of Biology, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky 40292, USA

## Announcements

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**The Arcachon tern** We understand that the French Rarities Committee is still assessing the record of the yellow-billed tern *Sterna* at Arcachon, France, depicted recently in *British Birds* (81: 217, plate 118). Our captioning of this individual as Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* was, therefore, premature; we apologise for any confusion caused.

**Special offers in British BirdShop** The following special offers are still available this month:

British Birds/IBCE *International Bird Identification*

Goodwin *Crows of the World*

Knystautas *The Natural History of the USSR*

Sharrock *Frontiers of Bird Identification*

These can be ordered POST FREE through British BirdShop. Please use the order forms on pages xi & xii.

## Reviews

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**Where to Watch Birds in Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire & Oxfordshire.** By Brian Clews, Andrew Heryet and Paul Trodd. Christopher Helm, London, 1987. 316 pages; 31 line-drawings; 74 maps. Paperback £9.95.

This is another book in the excellent series of regional birdwatching guides currently being produced by Christopher Helm. It covers the five counties to the north and west of central London which, although not regarded as top birdwatching counties, are nevertheless home to many British birdwatchers (and the professional ornithologists based at Blunham, Sandy and Tring). Following the introduction, there are short sections on weather and its effect on birds, advice on how to use the book, a glossary of terms, and a list of useful addresses. The bulk of the book is divided into five sections: one for each county. Within each county, each site of major ornithological interest is dealt with in depth, whilst other sites are mentioned briefly. Nine major sites are described in Bedfordshire, 14 in Berkshire, 17 in Buckinghamshire, ten in Hertfordshire and 16 in Oxfordshire. Site-accounts vary in length from two to seven pages, and each one includes sections headed 'Habitat', 'Access', 'Species' and 'Calendar'. The first of these contains a brief description of the site and usually mentions its history and current ownership. The access section describes the site's exact location and includes advice about where to park and how to go about finding birds. The species section is the longest in each site account, and describes in detail most of the species which visit the site at various times of the year.

The calendar simply lists the more interesting species to be found at the site during each of the four seasons, and as residents. After a brief bibliography, 43 pages of maps (one for each major site) finish off the book.

Perhaps understandably, I found the species accounts the most interesting part of the book. These really do go into great detail, often mentioning many of the commoner species as well as the more unusual. I found the accounts that dealt with the changes through the year (such as that for Stewartby Lake) most enjoyable and probably worth reading even by people who are not planning visits. Unfortunately, I have not field-tested the book by visiting any unfamiliar sites, but the information provided, when used in conjunction with the maps, should be enough to enable first-time visitors to enjoy a profitable trip. I found it slightly irritating to have to turn to the back of the book each time that I wanted to compare the account with the map, and think it would have been better to include the maps amongst the site accounts. This small criticism aside, the book seems well produced and reasonably priced for 316 pages of information. It should prove very useful to birdwatchers visiting the area and to residents who have recently started watching birds.

DAVID FISHER

**International Bird Identification: Proceedings of the 4th International Identification Meeting Eilat 1st-8th November 1986. Edited by P. J. Grant, J. T. R. Sharrock, S. Taggar and H. Shirihai.** British Birds Ltd, Biggleswade, & International Birdwatching Center, Eilat, 1987. 64 pages; 38 colour plates; 13 black-and-white plates; 19 line-drawings. Paperback, £8.50.

The 4th International Identification Meeting was held at Eilat in November 1986; a total of 23 delegates representing 11 countries attended. The meeting enabled many top field birdwatchers to get together to discuss over 30 topics involving the complexities of bird identification.

For the first time, a series of short papers arising out of these discussions has now been published. This proves to be an exceedingly useful publication, gleaned from ideas and group discussion over various thorny problems associated with identifying Western Palearctic birds. A variety of subjects covered in this publication is treated in the form of 16 short, thought-provoking and well-illustrated papers.

Subjects are markedly diverse, and include an excellent summary of the Greater *Charadrius leschenaultii* and Lesser Sand Plovers *C. mongolus* by Barry Taylor, updating his previous paper on one of the trickiest of all complexes (*Dutch Birding* 4: 113-130). Urban Olsson's contribution on identification of snipes *Gallinago* includes an interesting theory that the Nearctic race of Snipe *G. gallinago delicata* is perhaps best given full species status: it seems as different from Eurasian forms as some other snipe species are from each other. Indeed, *delicata* is seemingly more distinct than are the two forms of 'Lesser Golden Plover' *Pluvialis dominica/fulva* in many respects, a review of this taxonomic headache being supplied by J. L. Dunn, J. Morlan and C. P. Wilds. Klaus Malling Olsen has admirably summarised ideas on identifying juvenile skuas *Stercorarius*. With Peter Grant and Philippe J. Dubois attending the meeting, it is no surprise to have interesting items on the newly described Iberian race of 'Yellow-legged' Herring Gull *Larus argentatus lusitanicus* and the Israeli wintering population of Armenian Herring Gulls *L. a. armenicus*. Hadoram Shirihai's contributions include an excellent summary of the Mountain Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus sindianus* and discussion on beema Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava*, with some very useful photographs, the latter being especially useful to those of us lucky (or unlucky) enough to discover a grey-and-white *flava* wagtail in autumn in Britain. Per Alström and Urban Olsson have reviewed the problems of separating Arctic *Phylloscopus borealis* and Greenish Warblers *P. trochiloides*, but their results leave us in no doubt that the best way of doing it is to hear the bird call. An absorbing summary of juvenile Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* by Killian Mullarney is surprisingly without illustrations. Other contributions are from Lars Svensson, J. T. R. Sharrock, William S. Clark, Krister Mild and Merav Gellert.

This is an excellent and exciting publication; one can only hope that future International Identification Meeting discussions can be edited into a similar format. Everyone with an interest in bird identification should get a copy right away.

S. C. MADGE

**Flamingos. By Malcolm and Carol Ogilvie.** Alan Sutton, Gloucester, 1986. 121 pages; 8 colour plates; 38 line-drawings; 8 maps. £9.95.

No-one forgets their first encounter with flamingos, whether as captive spectaculars in a zoo or as shimmering pink ghosts across sun-baked salt-pans. Flamingos are at once ungainly and superbly graceful; and never uninteresting. Everybody wants to know about flamingos, but where is the classic text? This excellent little book neatly fills the present gap, hopefully destined to become the standard popular reference book on the group.

The text is written with a real sense of enjoyment, by an author clearly intrigued by his subject. Did you know, for instance, that the Romans considered the tongues of the Phoenicopteridae to be a delicacy? And I challenge anyone to read the lengths to which the late Leslie Brown was prepared to go to discover the distribution of Lesser Flamingos in East Africa without feeling decidedly weak-kneed. Our lack of basic knowledge relating to all six species is clearly underlined by the book, and the narrative of our slow discovery of the secrets of the flamingo is often as strange as the birds themselves. Each species is described in terms of status and distribution: reviews of considerable value in defining some of the conservation and survey requirements of the different populations. Maps demonstrate clearly the remarkably dispersed nature of the breeding sites of all populations. The species accounts are followed by general chapters on behaviour, breeding, feeding and the interactions between flamingos and Man. All the chapters underline the need for further research, especially with regard to the very special conservation problems of a family clearly adapted to take advantage of conditions temporarily suitable for successful breeding.

The style of writing is highly readable, and the book is punctuated by Carol Ogilvie's excellent line-drawings and charming plates. I would find only one fault on the illustration side, with the sketch of 'algae and brine shrimp' on page 99, which appears neither accurate nor very informative. That aside, you will not find a better reference book on these rosy rascals.

TONY FOX

**Atlas van de Nederlandse Vogels. Compiled by SOVON.** Arnhem, 1987. 595 pages; 15 black-and-white plates; 268 line-drawings, numerous maps. £21.00.

Some bird atlases have been confined to the breeding birds; others have been concerned with wintering birds; in some large areas with few observers, other atlases have combined records for the whole year. This gigantic and magnificent book, however, covers the whole year, month by month, with up to 12 maps per species.

The Netherlands is a fairly small country, with a large number of highly competent observers (probably over 5,000 were involved in this survey). Nevertheless, the grid used (5 × 5 km squares) and separate monthly recording (60 survey months) resulted in 220,000 record cards with a total of five million observations of 426 species and subspecies, summarised in 20,000 distribution maps covering—after elimination of double counts—four million observations. The tens of thousands of hours of fieldwork and the thousands of hours of checking and computer plotting have been well rewarded with a book which gives full justice to the grandiose scale of the project. Distributions are mapped by months or groups of months, and the monthly totals are shown in the form of histograms for each of the six years separately, and for them combined.

Although the text is wholly in Dutch, there is a three-page English summary, which is in sufficient detail for the British reader to understand and use the whole atlas. The individual species texts do not, however, have any English summaries, so the non-Dutch-speaking reader needs to make his or her own interpretations of the distributions shown. To aid this, a transparent overlay is provided, showing the distributions within the Netherlands of deciduous forest, coniferous forest, coastal dunes and beach, wet moorland, heathland, marsh, waters more than six metres across, and drift sands. With histograms in blue, and the maps with blue outlines and black dots, well-thought-out design and a scattering of pleasing line-drawings, this is an attractive as well as invaluable reference book. The editors—Johan Bekhuis, Rob Bijlsma, Arend van Dijk, Fred Hustings, Rob Lensink and Frank Saris—as well as all those who took part in the survey, deserve our thanks and admiration.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

# News and comment

*Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch*

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'



235. Sue Arnold presents Bob Glover, winner of the 1988 'Bird Photograph of the Year' award, with his cheque and salver, London, May 1988 (*Tessa Musgrave*)

**BPY reception** This year's 'Bird Photograph of the Year' Press Reception, held in London on 9th May 1988, was hit by the perennial problem of tempting bird-photographers away from the field and into a room in the centre of a city on a fine early-summer day. The second-prize winner (guess who!) was once again in Portugal, and the third-prize winner was in France (presumably still clad in a rubber suit and a muskrat's nest), but we did tempt Bob Glover away from Essex to accept his salver and cheque in person from our glamorous, eloquent and witty guest presenter, Sue Arnold of *The Observer* (plates 235 & 236).

236. BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR 1988: left to right, Eric Hosking (Judge), Christopher Helm (Sponsor, Christopher Helm Publishers Ltd), Sue Arnold (Guest Presenter, *The Observer*), Crispin Fisher (Sponsor, William Collins Son & Co Ltd), Bob Glover (1988 winner) and Don Smith (Judge); London, May 1988 (*Tessa Musgrave*)



**OSME is ten** Regular readers will need no introduction to OSME—the acronym by which the Ornithological Society of the Middle East is universally known. We congratulate OSME on its 10th anniversary and hope that it will go from strength to strength in its *next* decade. On 26th November 1988, it will hold a special celebration afternoon at Friends House in London (opposite Euston Station). This will feature three distinguished speakers: William Wilkinson (first OSME chairman and now chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council), Nergis Yazgan (OSME vice-president, and president of the Turkish conservation organisation DHKD) and Richard ‘Doesn’t he speak good English for a Turk’ Porter (above all others, perhaps, the driving force behind OSME’s founding and its success). Members and non-members are welcome, but numbers are limited, so book at once: tickets, minimum price £5 (all proceeds go towards future conservation work in the Middle East), from The Secretary, OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

**OBC meeting in Sweden** The Oriental Bird Club will hold its first-ever Swedish meeting near Falsterbo at 5pm on 1st October. It will feature talks (in English!) on China by Per Alström and Urban Olsson, and on Pakistan by Erik Hirschfeld and Magnus Ullman. Anyone interested should contact Steve Rooke by telephone: Wellingborough (0933) 650755, or write to Erik Hirschfeld, S. Förstadsgr. 62, S-21143, Malmö, Sweden.

**Med. Seabird Symposium** The Mediterranean Marine Bird Association ‘Medmaravis’ has given us early warning of the second Mediterranean Seabird Symposium, which will be held at Palma de Mallorca, in the Balearic Islands, during 21st–26th March 1989. The symposium title is ‘Status and Conservation of Seabirds: Ecogeography and Mediterranean Action Plan’. For more information, write to Medmaravis, 20 rue Saint Martin, 75004 Paris, France.

**Tim Davis moves to Wildfowl Trust** After exactly five years with the BTO, Tim Davis took up a new appointment on 1st August, as the Wildfowl Trust’s Membership Officer, based at Slimbridge. Representing the BTO, Tim’s contacts with *BB* have been

many and fruitful; we wish him well in his new job.

**Great Bustards and White-rumped Swifts in Cadiz province** A recent report from the Spanish Agencia de Medio Ambiente (environment agency), by Jesus Parody, highlights the drastic decline of the Great Bustard *Otis tarda* in southern Spain. The decline in Andalusia has been catastrophic: from several thousand to barely a couple of hundred in the last 50 years. The provinces of Cadiz and Seville were traditionally good for Great Bustards, but the 1987 survey in the province of Cadiz (7,385 km<sup>2</sup>) produced only 20 individuals. One group (three males and five females) raised two young, but two other groups (each of five) raised none. The most important factors causing the decline are hunting (including shooting from light aircraft), changing agricultural practices (including mechanisation, pesticides and herbicides), the construction of reservoirs and the erection of high-tension cables. The report recommends a total ban on all hunting for a five-year period in those areas where bustards breed, as well as adequate habitat conservation, increased vigilance and regular censusing.

The same report summarises a survey of White-rumped Swifts *Apus caffer* in Cadiz province between June and September 1987. White-rumped Swifts were first found nesting in Europe in 1964, in the Sierra de la Plata (Cadiz). The species parasitises Red-rumped Swallows *Hirundo daurica*, taking over their nests. Between 24 and 29 nests were estimated for the entire province, typically sited in old bunkers, in disused tunnels, under bridges and in caves. Most nests were within 30 km of Gibraltar, and very few were found in the original site at Sierra de la Plata. The report also states that the species is suffering from Central European egg-thieves who visit the area annually. (*Contributed by Dr J. C. Finlayson*)

**Original ‘Hilary Burns’** Many of the original paintings from *The RSPB Book of British Birds* (Holden, Sharrock & Burn 1982) are now on display at the Henry-Brett Galleries at Stow-on-the-Wold, Gloucestershire. They can be purchased there, or *BB* readers could direct enquiries to Hilary Burn personally (c/o Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ).

**Going for a song** Nice to see the Milton Keynes *Mirror* featuring a report with this apt title on International Dawn Chorus Day



on Sunday 1st May; but their reporter's ID seems a little suspect: 'Among the warblers picked out . . . were reed buntings and lesser spotted white throats.' (Contributed by Barry Nightingale)

**Andalusian Hemipode** During a discussion on the proposed changes to English names of birds, the vehement opponent of one particular change (we'll call him 'Fred' to spare his blushes, for he is an eminent, well-known and very knowledgeable ornithologist) stated forcefully:

'I have never seen an Andalusian Hemipode, and, when I do, I want to see an "Andalusian Hemipode" not a "Striped Button-Quail", which makes it sound like just another boring button-quail.'

'But, Fred', said one of his colleagues (let's call him Tom), 'surely you *have* seen Andalusian Hemipode?'

'No!', replied Fred decisively, 'It's a species I've always wanted to see, but never have.'

'But, Fred', said Tom, 'you've seen Button-Quail in Ethiopia, Little Button-Quail in Thailand, and Little Bustard-Quail in India, haven't you?'

'Yes', said Fred.

'Well, those are merely alternative names for Andalusian Hemipode', revealed Tom.

'Oh . . .', said Fred.

That ended the opposition to *that* particular name-change proposal.

**More on bird names . . .** Too many people to be thanked individually sent us the programme for a Dutch Birdwatching Special holiday in August 1988, devised for members of the Birds and Natural History Book Society, the Country Book Society and the World of Nature, all in association with Ladbroke Hotels. It promised to be very special indeed, with a highlight of the visit to Texel being the 'traditional gathering of over 100 blackened grebes' . . . or was it actually a ghoulish visit to an oil slick?

**. . . and more still** Overheard some time ago on a sea-watch: *Observer A*: 'Where's "Pomarine" then?' *Observer B*: 'Oh, somewhere in the Baltic, I think.' *Observer C* (clearly more knowledgeable): 'No—it's Siberia.' You may well laugh, but (without looking it up) how many of you know how the 'Pom' got its name, and that strictly speaking it should be Pomatorhine in any case? (Don't write and tell us—we've looked it up already!)

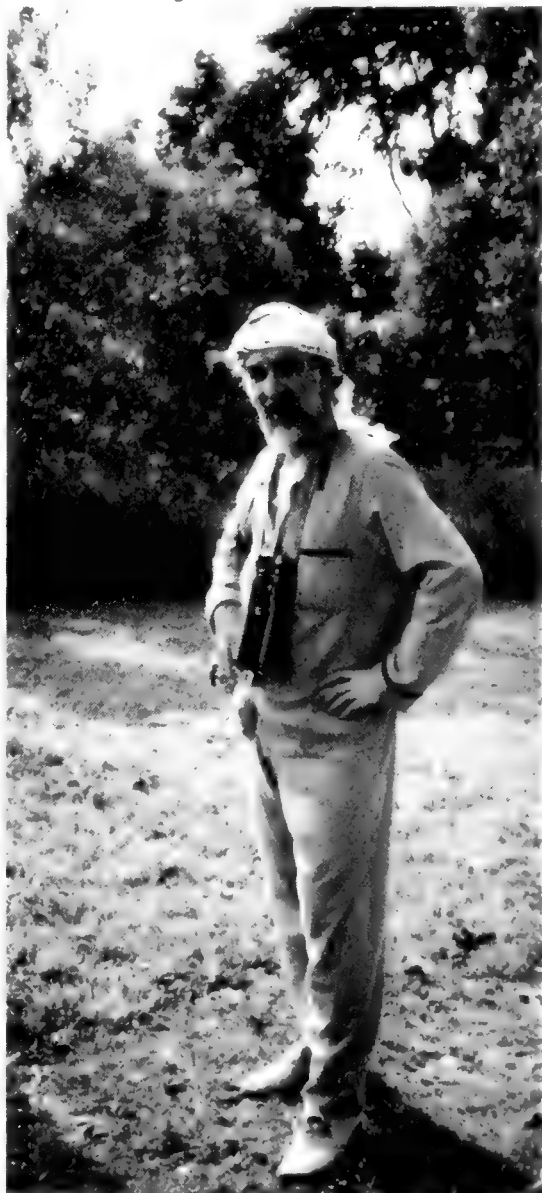
**TV quiz winners** The three RSPB contestants in *Busman's Holiday*, Ian Dawson, Chris Harbard and Jonathan Osborne (*Brit. Birds* 80: 652), duly beat all their rivals to win, first, a birdwatching trip to Tunisia (luckily for them, this was the 'European' destination chosen by the programme's devisers), and then went on to complete a clean sweep, winning a trip to Trinidad.

**Who said . . . ?** (a) 'I don't like trees or hot weather, so I don't know why I came to Thailand!'; (b) 'Photography in the Thai forest? Exposure? Give it a fortnight at f.8.'

Answer below.

All the clues are here. With few trees and a less-than-tropical climate in his native Thailand, these comments were both made by professional photographer Dennis Coutts (plate 237).

**237.** Dennis Coutts, Thailand, March 1988  
(J. T. R. Sharrock)



# May reports



*Keith Allsopp and Ian Dawson*

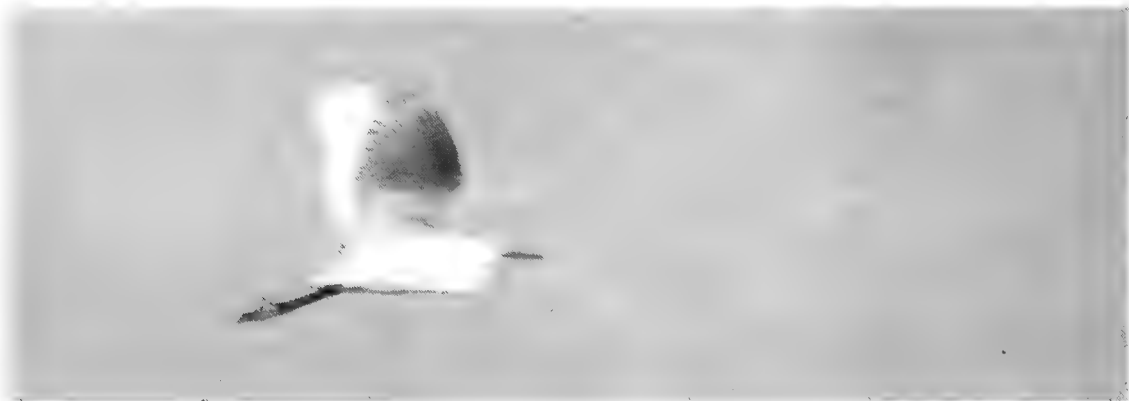
These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records. Unless otherwise stated, dates refer to May 1988

*As in April, anticyclones near to Britain and Ireland resulted in mainly dry, settled weather, as frontal systems became slow-moving and inactive. A high-pressure region over northern Europe from 6th to 16th brought easterly winds with warmer spells of weather, being replaced by cold northerly air until 19th; and followed by cool south to southwesterly winds in the south and periods of easterlies over northern Scotland.*

## Set Fair for the Northern Isles

Fair Isle, once the undisputed top birding spot in the country, has had to share that honour with others in recent decades, including nearby Orkney. This month, Fair Isle and Orkney became the haven for many North European migrants displaced by easterly winds across the North Sea; although numbers were not huge compared with autumnal falls, they were notable for spring. Strong southeasterly winds from north Germany developed during 13th to 15th; by then, there were 55 **Bluethroats** *Luscinia svecica* on Fair Isle and 30 in Orkney, and 30 **Red-backed Shrikes** *Lanius collurio* at each locality. Prominent among the commoner migrants on Fair Isle were 500 **Wheatears** *Oenanthe oenanthe*, 180 **Tree Pipits** *Anthus trivialis* and seven **Yellow Wagtails** *Motacilla flava* of the Scandinavian, grey-headed race *thunbergi*. Rarer species there included a **Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla*, a **Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia*, **Golden Orioles** *Oriolus oriolus* and a **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla*. A further period of southeasterlies from 22nd until the end of the month brought more rarities to Fair Isle: a **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator*, **Icterine Warblers** *Hippolais icterina*, a **Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*, seven **Scarlet Rosefinches** *Carpodacus erythrinus* and three **Marsh Warblers** *Acrocephalus palustris*; and in Orkney, **Golden Orioles**, **Icterine** and **Melodious Warblers** *Hippolais polyglotta*, a **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva*,

Marsh Warblers, 12 Scarlet Rosefinches, a Thrush Nightingale, the islands' first Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*, a Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* and a magnificent Needle-tailed Swift *Hirundapus caudacutus*, which arrived on 28th and stayed.



238. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Dorset, May 1988 (P. R. Boardman)

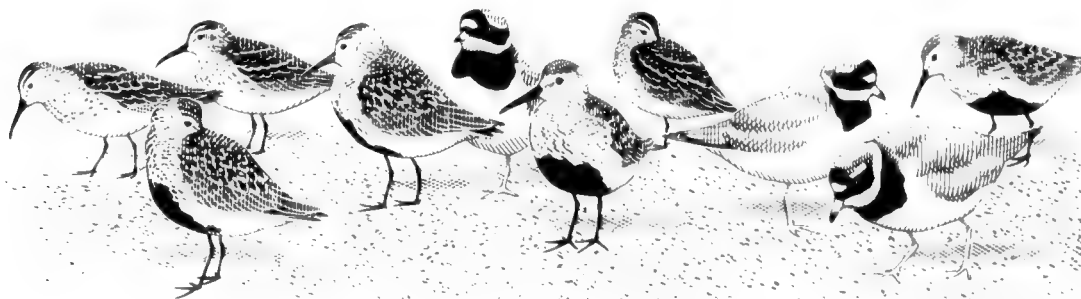
### Divers to wildfowl

**Great Northern Divers** *Gavia immer* were numerous inshore around Islay (Strathclyde), and a **White-billed Diver** *G. adamsii* in summer plumage was seen farther north, in Achnahaird Bay (Highland) on 31st. The regular **Black-browed Albatross** *Diomedea melanophrys* had not returned to the Hermaness (Shetland) gannetry, but one was photographed at sea over the Dogger Bank (North Sea) on 21st. Southern herons became commoner throughout the month, but mainly in the south of Britain and Ireland. **Little Bitterns** *Ixobrychus minutus* were seen at Starcross (Devon), on Guernsey (Channel Islands) and at Wexford; **Little Egrets** *Egretta garzetta* were reported from 12 sites (plate 238), singly except for the five together at Beaulieu Mill Pond (Hampshire) on 26th; and of the seven records of **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea*, two came from the Isles of Scilly and three from Kent. Three **Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* could be found along the North Norfolk coast, one on the Suffolk coast and two on the Kent coast. With little movement this month, wildfowl reports were few: five single **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea* were part of the increasing band

of escapees, and two **American Wigeons** *Anas americana*, a **Teal** *A. crecca* of the Nearctic race *carolinensis*, a **Blue-winged Teal** *A. discors*, and a **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris*, marooned on this side of the Atlantic, did not stay long where they were found. A **Falcated Duck** *Anas falcata* stayed at Cley (Norfolk) from 7th, departing on 15th. Long-staying wintering **Surf Scoters** *Melanitta perspicillata* could still be found off Aberdeen (Grampian) until 22nd, when two were present. **Ruddy Ducks** *Oxyura jamaicensis* continue to appear more widely, one reaching North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 3rd.

### Birds of prey

Six **Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* were noted, with two in Orkney and two on Fair Isle, both on 25th; and there were a further nine sightings of **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans* from England and Wales. In contrast, there were just three reports of **Red Kites** *M. milvus* outside Wales. A **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* at Minsmere (Suffolk) was an unseasonal sighting there, but one on Rathlin Island (Co. Antrim) on 24th was not unexpected, being near to the Hebridean releases. There were six reports



of **Montagu's Harriers** *Circus pygargus* in English southeast coastal districts, and late **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* were seen on Rathlin Island until 19th, at Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire) on 21st, and from Hickling (Norfolk) on 27th. Off-course **Ospreys** *Pandion haliaetus* were commonly reported; of the 39 sightings outside Scotland, 19 were on the British east coast and five were on Orkney, all bar one of singles. The five **Red-footed Falcons** *Falco vespertinus* found across southern England were probably finding insect prey scarce in the cool conditions.

### Wading birds

With the incidence of easterly winds, a good variety of wading birds passed through. Lone **Cranes** *Grus grus* wandered along the British east coast, two getting together at Cley on 5th; a **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* was on the Hayle Estuary (Cornwall) on 3rd; and single **Stone-curlews** *Burhinus oedipnemos*, as last month, were unexpected finds at Leasowe (Merseyside), at Brading (Isle of Wight), on Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) and at Houghton Regis (Bedfordshire), all in the first half of the month. A small influx of **Kentish Plovers** *Charadrius alexandrinus* took place; of the 14 reported, most were in the southeast of England, but one at Haverigg (Cumbria) was new for that county. The **Greater Sand Plover** *C. leschenaultii* found in April at Dawlish Warren (Devon) stayed until 4th, and a further report was of one at St Brides Wentlloog (Gwent) on 16th, but even rarer and more elusive was a **Caspian Plover** *C. asiaticus* on St Agnes (Scilly), seen only on 21st. Early in the month, **Dotterels** *C. morinellus* were reported in small groups pausing on

their way north, with 24 on Pendle Hill (Lancashire) on 9th being the largest; thereafter stragglers were noted. **American Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis dominica* were found at Sandwich Bay (Kent), between 5th and 16th, and as a new species for Spurn (Humberside) on 20th to 26th. A total of 27 **Temminck's Stints** *Calidris temminckii* was reported from 19 localities scattered mainly across east England, and **Broad-billed Sandpipers** *Limicola falcinellus* were good finds, with ten reported, including three together at Cliffe (Kent) on 27th. Further Nearctic species found were a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* at Fairburn Ings (North Yorkshire) on 5th, two more **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularia*, at Barn Elms Reservoirs (London) on 16th and on Guernsey on 25th, and a **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* at Leighton Moss (Lancashire) on 24th and 25th.

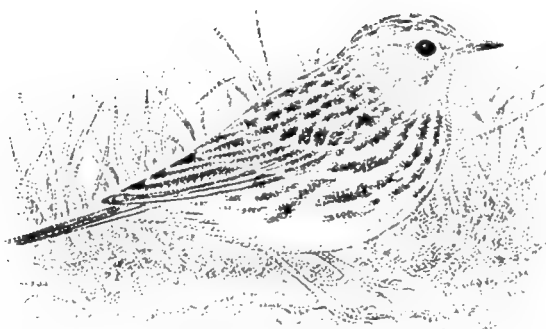
### Skuas to terns

The menacing, controlled flying power of **Pomarine Skuas** *Stercorarius pomarinus* excites the imagination, so the sight of 75 on 1st and 69 on 7th on passage at Dungeness (Kent) was impressive, as were 24 in the Solway Firth (Cumbria) on 4th. No less exciting were **Long-tailed Skuas** *S. longicaudus*, with one in the Solway Firth on 1st,



239 & 240. Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*, Merseyside, May 1988 (Steve Young)



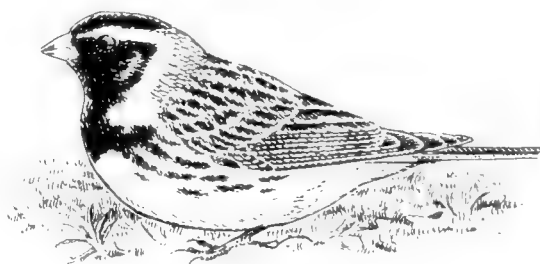


singles at Dungeness on 2nd and 8th, and three at Balranald (Western Isles) on 18th. It was a quiet month for gulls, most having moved away to breeding sites, but six **Mediterranean Gulls** *Larus melanocephalus*, mainly single wanderers, were seen in England and Wales (plates 239 & 240) and a **Franklin's Gull** *L. pipixcan* stopped briefly at Fairburn Ings (North Yorkshire) on 17th. Unusual spring records were of **Sabine's Gulls** *L. sabini*, with one at Whitehaven (Cumbria) on 1st and 2nd, and others at East Gullane Point (Lothian) on 23rd and in the Bristol Channel (Avon) on 30th. **Caspian Terns** *Sterna caspia* were found inland at five sites on 7th and 8th, one at Winthorpe (Nottinghamshire) staying until 12th; two others were seen later, at Minsmere on 11th, and in northwest Norfolk on 26th. As in the previous year, a **Lesser Crested Tern** *S. bengalensis* appeared in the tern colony on the Farne Islands (Northumberland) on 12th. The ten sightings of **Whiskered Terns** *Chlidonias hybridus* probably involved a few individuals moving through southern England and Ireland. Inland passage of **Black Terns** *C. niger* was patchy, with 27 at Church Wilne Reservoir (Derbyshire) on 27th being a notable concentration.

#### Swifts to passerines

Four **Alpine Swifts** *Apus melba* were reported in the south of England, but four of the nine

sightings of **Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster* were in northern England, as were five of the 13 **Hoopoes** *Upupa epops*. A **Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* flew through Spurn Point on 31st, with another reported earlier, in Kent on 10th. A **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* was an unusual spring record on Blakeney Point (Norfolk) on 11th, but more expected were the further seven **Tawny Pipits** in southern England and Ireland; and of the seven **Red-throated Pipits** *A. cervinus*, three were on Blakeney Point on 18th. Four additional grey-headed **Yellow Wagtails** and three more **Thrush Nightingales** were found on southeast coasts, and, apart from ten on the Isle of May (Fife), **Bluethroats** were found in small numbers all along the east coast of Britain. Up to 15 **Subalpine Warblers** *Sylvia cantillans* were seen, a **Sardinian Warbler** *S. melanocephala* was in the Isles of Scilly on 10th and 11th, and there were two **Bonelli's Warblers** *Phylloscopus bonelli* and four other British east coast **Red-breasted Flycatchers**. Single **Red-backed Shrikes** were found all along the east coast of Britain, a **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* was a new species for the Borders, and nine more **Woodchat Shrikes** were scattered across England and Ireland. A **Raven** *Corvus corax* stayed at Minsmere from 15th to 20th, a male **Lapland Bunting** *Calcarius lapponicus* graced Blakeney Point in mid month, and six splendid **Ortolan Buntings** *Emberiza hortulana* were found in the first two weeks, one at Walney being the first live record for Cumbria.



## Recent reports

*Compiled by Mark Boyd*

This summary covers the period 18th July-14th August 1988

**Wilson's Petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* Beyond Cornwall, up to 16 on 'pellagic' trips.

**Tristram's Storm Petrel** *Oceanodroma tristrami* Beyond Cornwall, 3rd August.

**Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* Walney Island (Cumbria), 22nd July-5th August.

**Stilt Sandpiper** *Micropalama himantopus* Lady's Island Lake (Co. Wexford), 1st-3rd August; Ballycotton (Co. Cork), 7th August.

**Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* Ballycotton, two, 7th-9th August, one to 13th; Chew Valley Lake (Avon), 13th August.

# Rarities Committee

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## List of species

The following species, and also any which would be new to Category A of the British and Irish list, are considered by the *British Birds* Rarities Committee. Details of some well-marked subspecies (e.g. Teal of the North American race *Anas crecca carolinensis*, Yellow Wagtail of the black-headed race *Motacilla flava feldegg*) are also required.

White-billed Diver	Black Kite	Semipalmated Sandpiper
Pied-billed Grebe	White-tailed Eagle	Western Sandpiper
Black-browed Albatross	Egyptian Vulture	Red-necked Stint
Capped Petrel	Griffon Vulture	Long-toed Stint
Bulwer's Petrel	Pallid Harrier	Least Sandpiper
Little Shearwater	Spotted Eagle	White-rumped Sandpiper
Wilson's Petrel	Lesser Kestrel	Baird's Sandpiper
White-faced Petrel	American Kestrel	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
Madeiran Petrel	Red-footed Falcon	Broad-billed Sandpiper
Magnificent Frigatebird	Eleonora's Falcon	Stilt Sandpiper
American Bittern	Gyr Falcon	Great Snipe
Little Bittern	Sora Rail	Short-billed Dowitcher
Night Heron	Little Crake	Long-billed Dowitcher
Green Heron	Baillon's Crake	Hudsonian Godwit
Squacco Heron	Allen's Gallinule	Little Whimbrel
Cattle Egret	American Purple Gallinule	Eskimo Curlew
Little Egret	American Coot	Upland Sandpiper
Great White Egret	Sandhill Crane	Marsh Sandpiper
Black Stork	Little Bustard	Greater Yellowlegs
Glossy Ibis	Houbara Bustard	Lesser Yellowlegs
Lesser White-fronted Goose	Great Bustard	Solitary Sandpiper
Red-breasted Goose	Black-winged Stilt	Terek Sandpiper
American Wigeon	Cream-coloured Courser	Spotted Sandpiper
Baikal Teal	Collared Pratincole	Grey-tailed Tattler
Black Duck	Black-winged Pratincole	Wilson's Phalarope
Blue-winged Teal	Semipalmated Plover	Great Black-headed Gull
Ring-necked Duck	Killdeer	Laughing Gull
King Eider	Greater Sand Plover	Franklin's Gull
Steller's Eider	Caspian Plover	Bonaparte's Gull
Harlequin Duck	American Golden Plover	Slender-billed Gull
Surf Scoter	Pacific Golden Plover	Ross's Gull
Bufflehead	Sociable Plover	Ivory Gull
Hooded Merganser	White-tailed Plover	Gull-billed Tern

Caspian Tern  
 Royal Tern  
 Lesser Crested Tern  
 Aleutian Tern  
 Forster's Tern  
 Bridled Tern  
 Sooty Tern  
 Whiskered Tern  
 White-winged Black Tern  
 Brünnich's Guillemot  
 Pallas's Sandgrouse  
 Rufous Turtle Dove  
 Great Spotted Cuckoo  
 Black-billed Cuckoo  
 Yellow-billed Cuckoo  
 Scops Owl  
 Eagle Owl  
 Snowy Owl  
 Hawk Owl  
 Tengmalm's Owl  
 Red-necked Nightjar  
 Egyptian Nightjar  
 Common Nighthawk  
 Needle-tailed Swift  
 Chimney Swift  
 Pallid Swift  
 Pacific Swift  
 Alpine Swift  
 Little Swift  
 Belted Kingfisher  
 Blue-cheeked Bee-eater  
 Bee-eater  
 Roller  
 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker  
 Calandra Lark  
 Bimaculated Lark  
 White-winged Lark  
 Short-toed Lark  
 Lesser Short-toed Lark  
 Crested Lark  
 Red-rumped Swallow  
 Cliff Swallow  
 Blyth's Pipit  
 Olive-backed Pipit  
 Pechora Pipit  
 Red-throated Pipit  
 American Pipit  
 Citrine Wagtail  
 Alpine Accentor  
 Rufous Bush Robin  
 Thrush Nightingale  
 Siberian Rubythroat  
 Red-flanked Bluetail

White-throated Robin  
 Isabelline Wheatear  
 Pied Wheatear  
 Black-eared Wheatear  
 Desert Wheatear  
 White-crowned Black  
   Wheatear  
 Black Wheatear  
 Rock Thrush  
 White's Thrush  
 Siberian Thrush  
 Hermit Thrush  
 Swainson's Thrush  
 Grey-cheeked Thrush  
 Veery  
 Eye-browed Thrush  
 Dusky Thrush  
 Black-throated Thrush  
 American Robin  
 Fan-tailed Warbler  
 Pallas's Grasshopper  
   Warbler  
 Lanceolated Warbler  
 River Warbler  
 Moustached Warbler  
 Paddyfield Warbler  
 Blyth's Reed Warbler  
 Great Reed Warbler  
 Thick-billed Warbler  
 Olivaceous Warbler  
 Booted Warbler  
 Marmora's Warbler  
 Spectacled Warbler  
 Subalpine Warbler  
 Sardinian Warbler  
 Rüppell's Warbler  
 Desert Warbler  
 Orphean Warbler  
 Green Warbler  
 Greenish Warbler  
 Arctic Warbler  
 Pallas's Warbler  
 Radde's Warbler  
 Dusky Warbler  
 Bonelli's Warbler  
 Collared Flycatcher  
 Wallcreeper  
 Short-toed Treecreeper  
 Penduline Tit  
 Brown Shrike  
 Isabelline Shrike  
 Lesser Grey Shrike  
 Woodchat Shrike

Nutcracker  
 Daurian Starling  
 Rose-coloured Starling  
 Spanish Sparrow  
 Rock Sparrow  
 Philadelphia Vireo  
 Red-eyed Vireo  
 Citril Finch  
 Arctic Redpoll  
 Two-barred Crossbill  
 Parrot Crossbill  
 Trumpeter Finch  
 Pine Grosbeak  
 Evening Grosbeak  
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 Tennessee Warbler  
 Parula Warbler  
 Yellow Warbler  
 Chestnut-sided Warbler  
 Cape May Warbler  
 Magnolia Warbler  
 Yellow-rumped Warbler  
 Blackpoll Warbler  
 American Redstart  
 Ovenbird  
 Northern Waterthrush  
 Yellowthroat  
 Hooded Warbler  
 Wilson's Warbler  
 Summer Tanager  
 Scarlet Tanager  
 Rufous-sided Towhee  
 Savannah Sparrow  
 Fox Sparrow  
 Song Sparrow  
 White-crowned Sparrow  
 White-throated Sparrow  
 Dark-eyed Junco  
 Pine Bunting  
 Rock Bunting  
 Cretzschmar's Bunting  
 Yellow-browed Bunting  
 Rustic Bunting  
 Little Bunting  
 Yellow-breasted Bunting  
 Pallas's Reed Bunting  
 Black-headed Bunting  
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 Bobolink  
 Northern Oriole

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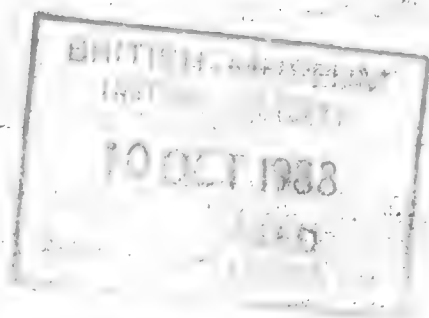
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# British Birds

Volume 81 Number 10 October 1988



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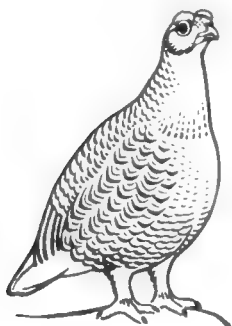
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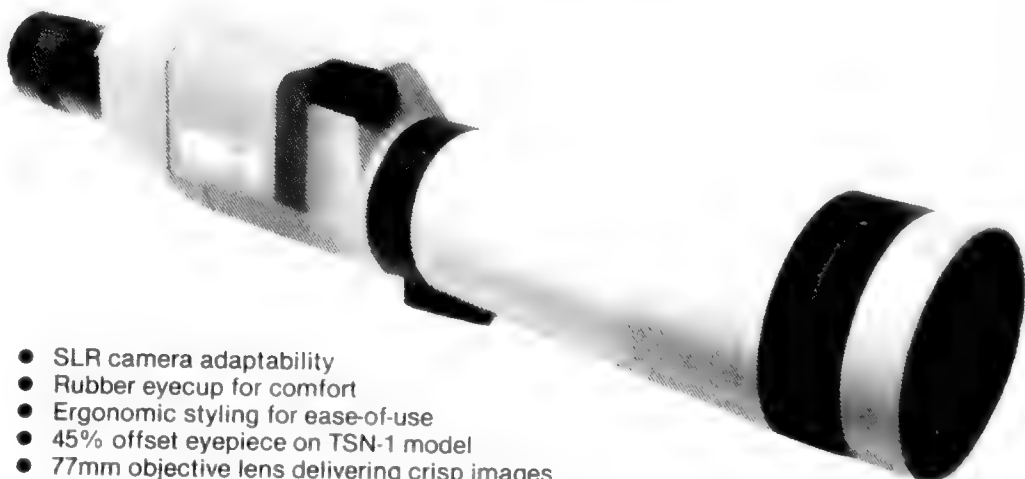
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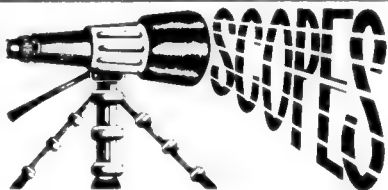
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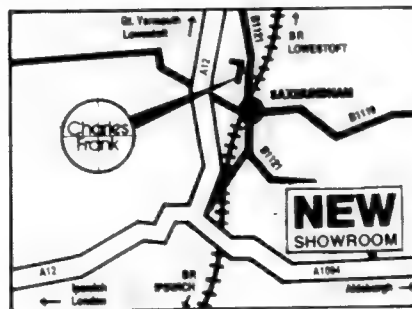
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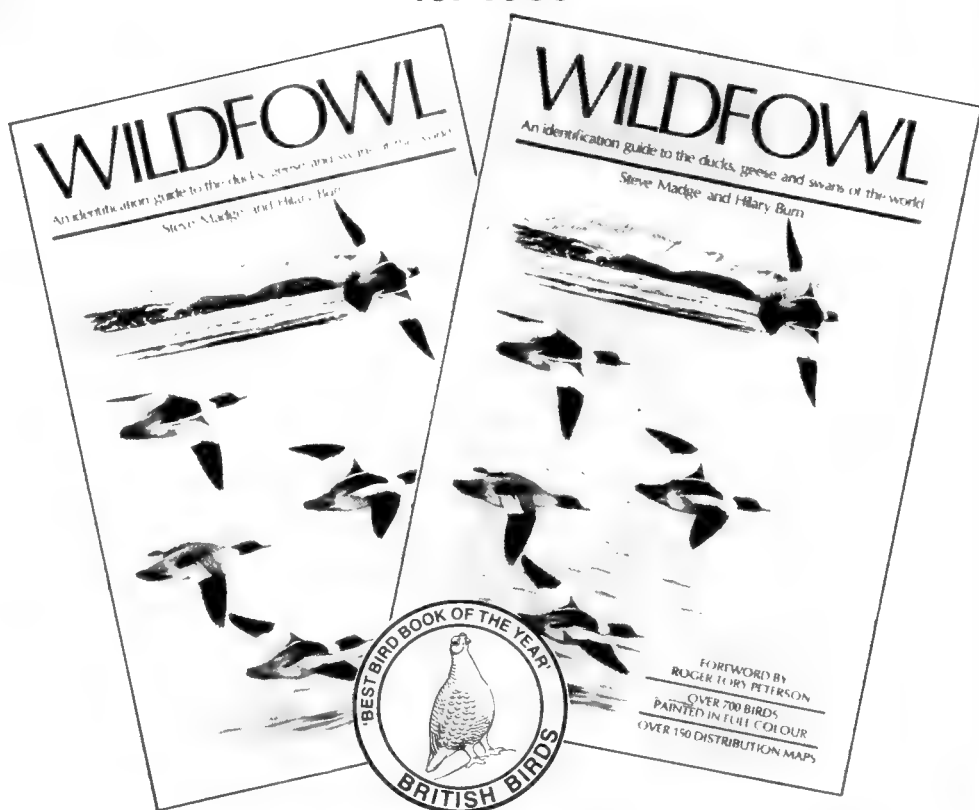


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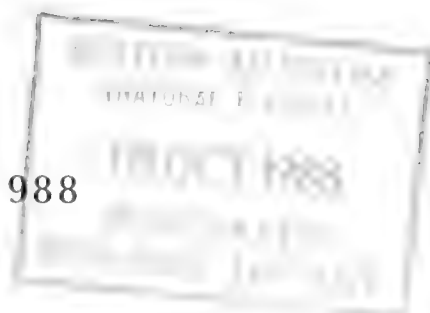
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# British Birds

VOLUME 81 NUMBER 10 OCTOBER 1988



## The 'British Birds' Best Bird Book of the Year



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Our choice for BEST BIRD BOOK OF 1988 is  
**Wildfowl: an identification guide to the ducks, geese and swans of the world.** By Steve Madge and Hilary Burn.  
Christopher Helm. £19.95. (Review: *Brit. Birds* 81: 406-407)





# Recent transatlantic vagrancy of landbirds and waders

*Norman Elkins*

**I**n a previous paper (Elkins 1979), I described the results of an analysis of the relationship of Nearctic landbird vagrancy in Britain and Ireland to atmospheric conditions. The analysis, which found an important affinity of arrivals of such birds to fast eastward-moving warm-sector depressions over the North Atlantic, covered the period 1967-76. In this paper, I shall review, in a meteorological context, the most recent decade, 1977-86, and also discuss recent Nearctic wader vagrancy.

## **Nearctic landbirds**

Compared with recent decades, records of most Nearctic landbirds (in Rogers *et al.* 1978-87) increased in number. The southwestern corners of Britain and Ireland, where the majority make landfall, are now very well watched at key periods, perhaps with observer coverage nearing saturation point. The increase in sightings due to observer bias may therefore have levelled off, making comparisons more meaningful.

In this decade, increases occurred in numbers of Yellow-billed Cuckoo\*, Swainson's Thrush, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Red-eyed Vireo, Black-and-white Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Northern Parula (formerly Parula Warbler) and Yellow-rumped Warbler (formerly Myrtle Warbler). Little or no change was noted in numbers of Blackpoll Warbler, Bobolink, American Robin and most sparrows, buntings and juncos, while Northern Orioles were scarcer. Overwintering was suspected for Black-and-white Warbler, and confirmed for White-throated Sparrow and Belted Kingfisher, but otherwise few landbirds were seen for any more than a short period after arrival. As might be expected, several species were recorded for the first time. Numbers of spring and winter sightings showed little change, while autumn records doubled.

Three years in the decade stand out. The year 1985 was noted for an abundance of vagrants, of which one-third (12) of the records were of Red-eyed Vireos. October was, however, an atypical month meteorologically.

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\*Scientific names of species mentioned in text are given in Appendix 2.

The falls in early October certainly coincided with frontal waves crossing the Atlantic, but arrivals continued after a blocking anticyclone became established over or near Britain from 11th until the end of the month. This is puzzling, but, as these later birds were mostly more southern-breeding species in the USA, they may have been engaged in reversed movements in fine southeasterly winds. Reversed passage is often the initial mechanism shown by these species in the USA prior to a transatlantic crossing (Elkins 1979). In this context, there was one vagrant record from northwest France. In contrast, 1980 produced only six records in an autumn noted for Nearctic wader vagrancy, but, since the normal peaks of the two vagrant groups are about a month apart, they are not subject to the same atmospheric conditions.

A further notable event was the multiple arrival of Gray-cheeked Thrushes in the Isles of Scilly and Cornwall in October 1986. This recalled a similar fall of Blackpoll Warblers in October 1976 (see Elkins 1979). When the two-to-five-day forecast synoptic charts were computed by the Meteorological Office on 14th-15th October, I immediately thought that a classic situation for such a fall was pending, although I could not foretell which Nearctic species would be involved, other than that it would be one of the more northern-breeding overseas migrant passerines which migrate in October. In fact, the Gray-cheeked Thrush is the most consistently late vagrant, and since 1967 all individuals have arrived between 13th and 31st October, well after its migration peak in North America.

The depression which arrived in southwest Britain early on 20th October, together with the bulk of the Gray-cheeked Thrushes, finally broke a long anticyclonic spell, and was the first of a series of waves on a long cold front trailing across the Atlantic between latitudes 45°N and 50°N, south of a slow-moving primary depression near Iceland. During 19th, 20-25 metres-per-second westerlies prevailed south of this front at low levels, with a very powerful westerly jet stream aloft and farther north. The first wave depression crossed very rapidly from a position 280 km east of Cape Race, Newfoundland, at midnight on 18th/19th, to a position 180 km northwest of Valentia, Co. Kerry, 24 hours later. Over south-east Canada, a ridge of high pressure was maintained during the whole of this period, with further waves moving ENE along the front from between the ridge and Bermuda (see fig. 1).

This situation was very similar to that of 4th October 1976, the main difference being that the cloud south of the front was initially much more broken in 1986, with the dense frontal cloud occupying a more northerly position with respect to the



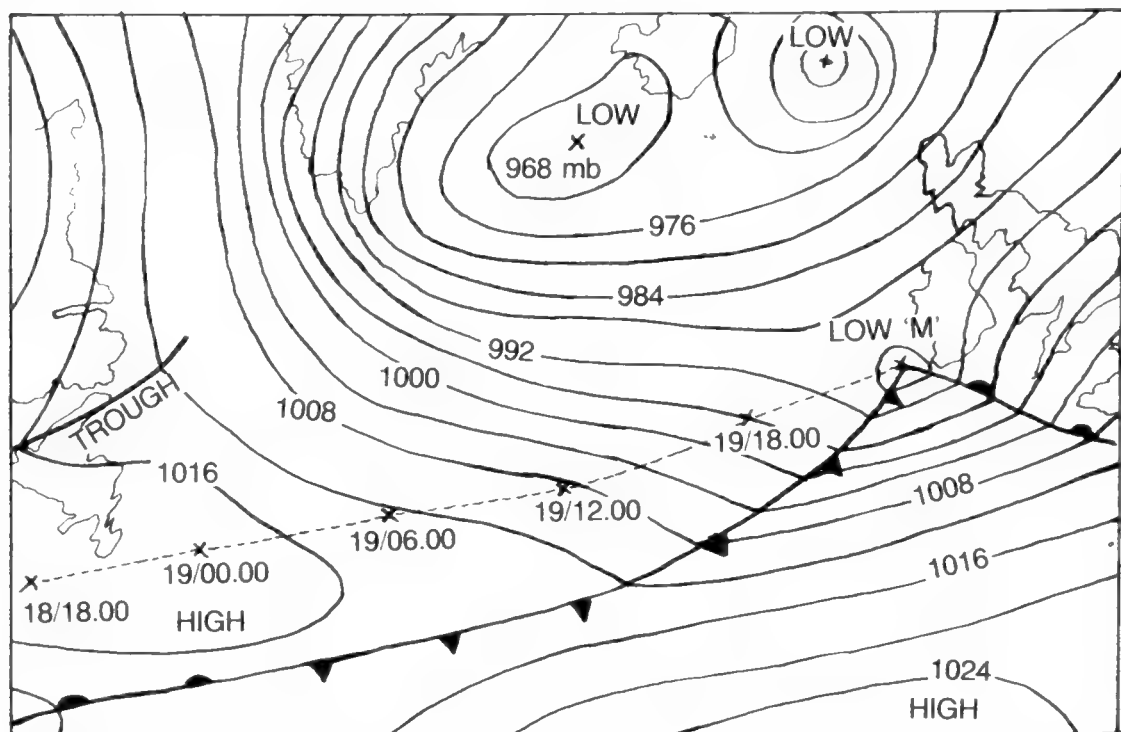


Fig. 1 Surface synoptic chart for 00.00 GMT on 20th October 1986. Previous positions of Low 'M' are shown at 6-hourly intervals, representing a mean speed across the Atlantic of 30 m/s

surface front. Any potential for displaced migrants to re-orient would have been overcome by the sheer strength of the airflow.

The similarity of these two situations suggests that single-species falls, as opposed to a trickle of several species, occur only when a migratory wave is in a critical position to become involved with an extremely mobile weather disturbance. Presumably, few other Nearctic landbirds arrived in 1986 because of the late date of this, the first good transatlantic westerly of the autumn.

### Nearctic waders

The background to normal long-distance autumn wader migration within North America and its relationship to transatlantic vagrancy was described by Nisbet (1959) and Elkins (1983), while occurrences in Britain and Ireland have been discussed by Sharrock (1971) and Sharrock & Sharrock (1976). Despite some difficulties, discussed later, I have undertaken a meteorological analysis, and have also briefly investigated the geographical and temporal distribution within Britain and Ireland.

### Methods

I chose to analyse the period 1968-86: that following on from the period covered by Sharrock (1971). I used all records published in Smith *et al.* (1969-75), Dymond *et al.* (1976), O'Sullivan *et al.* (1977) and Rogers *et al.* (1978-87). Those published in Rogers *et al.* (1987) are minimum numbers, as further records await acceptance. These reports did not include records of Pectoral Sandpipers, which were deleted in 1962 from the list of rare

species scrutinised by the *British Birds* Rarities Committee, as the species was being recorded too frequently to be classed as a national rarity. The Buff-breasted Sandpiper was omitted for the same reason after 1982. 'Lesser' Golden Plovers were not considered in this analysis, as the North American and Siberian forms were not always distinguishable, having only recently been separated into different species, the American and Pacific Golden Plovers. Despite these omissions, I consider the analysis to be valid.

For each September only—this being the month in which 60% of autumn vagrant waders were recorded—I scrutinised daily and monthly mean surface synoptic charts, which indicate wind flows up to approximately 1 km altitude, and also upper wind anomalies between the surface and the 5 km level. For the latter, I assigned a monthly index denoting the relative strength of the westerlies across the North Atlantic (see Appendix 1 for a detailed explanation). A high positive index indicated westerly upper winds much stronger than normal, while a high negative index indicated a much weaker flow. Similar indices were calculated for each August and October during the period.

I then compared the indices with the total number of Nearctic waders (with the exception of Pectoral Sandpiper and 'Lesser' Golden Plover) recorded for the first time in each autumn month between 1968 and 1982, and similarly with numbers between 1968 and 1986, with the additional exception of Buff-breasted Sandpipers.

### Results

Unlike the landbird analysis, little clear correlation was found between surface data and individual arrivals of wader vagrants in Britain and Ireland. Significant positive correlations emerged between wader totals and stronger-than-normal westerly airflows across the North Atlantic in the lower 5 km of the atmosphere, for both the 15-year period 1968-82, and the 19-year period 1968-86 (see Appendix 1), but for September only. No such correlation was discovered for August and October. The highest index (i.e. the strongest westerlies) occurred in September 1980, coincident with the most prolific wader falls. The only negative indices were in 1969, 1972, 1976 and 1986, corresponding to the four Septembers with the fewest wader vagrants. A further point of interest was this paucity of negative indices in the 19-year period, suggesting that the increase in sightings of vagrant waders may partly be due to the strengthening of the westerlies since the long-term averages were calculated. This follows on from Lamb *et al.* (1973), who found that, in September, North Atlantic westerlies between 45°N and 55°N increased in strength between the periods 1900-39 and 1951-66.

Only 45% of Nearctic wader first sightings in autumn (July to November) were in the far southwest and western counties of Britain and Ireland, compared with 71% of landbirds. Only 8% of autumn landbirds were first recorded in eastern coastal counties of Britain during the same period, compared with 22% of waders. In September, however, there is no significant difference in correlations with westerlies if eastern and western



records are considered separately. The above figures do not include Pectoral Sandpipers or 'Lesser' Golden Plovers, but are almost identical to those calculated earlier by Sharrock (1971) for the former species.

Dates of first records of waders are heavily biased toward weekend sightings. Twice as many autumn wader vagrants were first reported on a weekend day than on a weekday. For landbirds during the same period, there was no significant difference between weekend days and weekdays.

### *Discussion*

It is possible to relate transatlantic vagrancy of Nearctic landbirds to individual weather systems because they are relatively low-level migrants, within the lowest 1.5 km of the atmosphere, at least in mid and high latitudes, and their area of displacement can be located approximately.

With migrant waders, however, a number of unquantifiable factors militate against a similar analysis.

1. Waders possess greater endurance and, in general, are faster and larger than landbirds. Richardson (1976) found their mean groundspeed in autumn over Puerto Rico to be around 20% higher than that of passerines, and they often carry fat levels which allow for a potentially far longer uninterrupted passage than landbirds (Davidson 1984).
2. The origin of Nearctic waders arriving in Europe can be as far southwest as the centre of the North American continent, or as far west and northwest as Alaska and the northern Canadian Arctic islands. Indeed, some of the latter, perhaps American Golden Plover, White-rumped Sandpiper and Baird's Sandpiper, may migrate with Ringed Plover, Turnstone and Knot, which move southeast to European and West African wintering grounds from the same region.
3. Migration routes are complex, and the region in which displacement initially occurs is less obvious than with landbirds. Large numbers of many species perform the long overwater flight over the western North Atlantic from eastern Canada and northeast USA to the West Indies and South America, often following the same post-cold-frontal northwesterlies as do oversea migrant landbirds. Their stronger flight lowers the incidence of drift in newly formed frontal waves, but their higher flight increases the risk of drift in jet streams. Their altitude is, indeed, higher than the 500-1,500 m of landbirds, and covers a wider spectrum. Radar has shown the highest shorebirds departing Nova Scotia at a height of 6-7 km, with a mean of between 1 km and 3.5 km (Richardson 1976, 1979).
4. Individuals are more likely than landbirds to survive winters in northwest Europe (e.g. overwintering dowitchers and Lesser Yellowlegs), owing to their more catholic feeding habits and the continued availability of food. Thus, they may be first recorded some time, perhaps months, after arrival, and not necessarily in western areas, as can be seen from their geographical distribution within Britain and Ireland. The possibility exists of north-south passage within Europe of individuals which crossed the Atlantic in previous years, thought to involve Pectoral Sandpipers, Baird's Sandpipers (which have wintered in West Africa), White-rumped Sandpipers (which have summered in Svalbard) and Wilson's Phalaropes. Indeed, there have been a number of midsummer sightings, particularly of the last-named species, and a pair of Spotted Sandpipers bred in Scotland in 1975. Numbers of individuals in spring and summer have, however, shown little sign of increase during the past ten years, and bear no relationship to numbers in the previous autumn.
5. The more even spread of landbird records during the week reflects the concentration of sightings at well-watched sites such as bird observatories, whereas waders are identified in more open habitats and over a much wider range. There is a much greater chance of wader records being duplicated as individuals move from site to site.
6. Additionally, populations of Arctic waders are thought to be subject to much more variation in size than landbirds (e.g. Stanley & Minton 1972; Summers & Underhill 1987), although this aspect is admittedly much easier to monitor in waders by observing adult-young ratios in winter quarters.

Owing to the reasons mentioned above, it is not surprising that there is no significant correlation between wader vagrancy and low-level weather systems. At higher altitudes, the relationship of surface and upper winds increasingly breaks down and, while it is true that fast-moving frontal waves are overlain by strong jet streams from a similar direction, the breadth of the strong upper flow is much greater, perhaps covering some 10-15° of latitude as opposed to the 5° spread of the warm-sector flow associated with frontal waves. The upper winds can also be some three to four times stronger than those at low levels. Thus, the likelihood of high-flying wader migrants over the eastern North American seaboard entering this broad flow is much greater than for those at low altitudes, particularly for those populations of many species with a normal southeasterly heading across Canada. It is, thus, impossible to predict the initial region of displacement of a high-altitude migrant from its migratory track, and population fluctuations from year to year will also reduce any potential correlation with transatlantic winds. The rather higher correlation found when Buff-breasted Sandpipers are omitted from totals may be due partly to that species' rather different migration strategy, being more of an inland migrant within North America (see Elkins 1983 for discussion).

One northeastern Palearctic species, the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, probably arrives in Britain from the west rather than the east, as part of the population moves southeast into North America, although Sharrock (1971) suggested that northeast Siberian populations of Baird's and Pectoral Sandpipers may occasionally arrive from the east. There is also the possibility that reverse (northward) movement of southbound east Siberian waders may take place, with passage across the Arctic basin into northern Canada and thence southeast into Europe. In this, they may be assisted by a displaced and more intense polar cyclonic vortex (the mean flow around the North Pole is circular, in an easterly direction), in which a direct upper flow, stronger than normal, exists from northeast Siberia to the Canadian Arctic, either across the Pole or on its Pacific flank. European records of Little Whimbrel and Red-necked Stint may involve such a route, and Red-necked Stints have been seen in Ohio and Bermuda. Indeed, upper winds are more often favourable for this route in early autumn than for a westwards overland movement. On the other hand, many waders from northern Siberia move southwest at lower levels, and one Curlew Sandpiper recovered in Barbados had been present in Belgium two weeks previously.

The lack of any correlation of wader totals in August and October with North Atlantic westerlies may be attributable to the fourth factor listed above, namely movements within western Europe. Over each of these months as a whole, it is possible that such extralimital wanderers would mask any relationship with transatlantic winds, perhaps implying that only in September do the majority of vagrants actually cross the Atlantic.

Wader movements are global, and the routes taken by individuals away from their normal migratory tracks must always lie in the realms of speculation, but I am convinced that the vagaries of upper windflows are responsible for much of their vagrancy, with population dynamics playing a substantial role.

## Acknowledgments

I wish to thank the Meteorological Office and the Controller, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, for permission to use the synoptic chart in fig. 1.

## Summary

The appearance of autumn vagrant Nearctic landbirds and waders (most of the species listed in Appendix 2) in Britain and Ireland during the past two decades is discussed in a meteorological context. While sightings of landbirds can continue to be linked to fast-moving frontal waves across the North Atlantic, the weather pattern in 1985 suggested some degree of reverse movement, possibly from France.

A similar interpretation of wader movements was not possible for reasons set out. There is, however, a significant correlation in September of wader arrivals with winds at medium altitudes (up to 5 km), in parallel with the generally higher flight altitudes attained. Population fluctuations and the wide spectrum of flight altitude, route, endurance and survival all militate against a detailed meteorological analysis of their movements.

Possible meteorological influences on eastern Palearctic wader migrants are also discussed.

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## Appendix 1. Calculation of indices

The strength of the hemispheric atmospheric circulation at any given altitude in mid and high latitudes is dependent upon the steepness of the horizontal gradient of temperature

over a depth of atmosphere about this altitude (see fig. 2 in Elkins 1983). Over a period of time (e.g. a month), anomalies of this temperature gradient equate to a stronger or weaker circulation. For westerly winds in the northern hemisphere, the mean temperature increases from north to south. For westerlies stronger than normal, the gradient of temperature is therefore steeper, and anomalies show colder-than-normal air to the north and warmer to the south (i.e. a positive anomaly gradient). In the case of weaker westerly flow, or none at all, the gradient of temperature is shallower, or even reversed, and anomalies show warmer-than-normal air to the north and colder-than-normal to the south (i.e. a negative anomaly gradient).

The indices calculated equate to these temperature anomaly gradients (in °C) across 10° of latitude, and were derived from monthly mean temperature anomaly charts for the layer 1,000 mb to 500 mb (pressure levels approximately near the Earth's surface and at an altitude of 5.4 km). These anomalies are departures from long-term averages for periods ending 1960 in earlier years and 1970 in later years. For each autumn month, the north-south anomaly gradient was noted at 70°W, 50°W and 30°W across the latitude band 40°N to 50°N, and at 10°W across the band 45°N to 55°N. These co-ordinates were assumed to encompass the routes taken by the bulk of wader vagrants. The four calculations were meaned to give a single figure for each month.

Correlations were significant for both the 15-year period 1968-82 ( $r = 0.59, p < 0.05$ ), and the 19-year period 1968-86 ( $r = 0.69, p < 0.01$ ), for September only. Correlations were not significant for August and October.

Appendix 2. Scientific names of species mentioned in text

Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Wilson's Phalarope <i>Phalaropus tricolor</i>
American Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis dominica</i>	Yellow-billed Cuckoo <i>Coccyzus americanus</i>
Pacific Golden Plover <i>P. fulva</i>	Belted Kingfisher <i>Ceryle alcyon</i>
Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i>	Swainson's Thrush <i>Catharus ustulatus</i>
Red-necked Stint <i>C. ruficollis</i>	Gray-cheeked Thrush <i>C. minimus</i>
White-rumped Sandpiper <i>C. fuscicollis</i>	American Robin <i>Turdus migratorius</i>
Baird's Sandpiper <i>C. bairdii</i>	Red-eyed Vireo <i>Vireo olivaceus</i>
Pectoral Sandpiper <i>C. melanotos</i>	Black-and-white Warbler <i>Mniotilta varia</i>
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper <i>C. acuminata</i>	Northern Parula <i>Parula americana</i>
Curlew Sandpiper <i>C. ferruginea</i>	Yellow-rumped Warbler <i>Dendroica coronata</i>
Buff-breasted Sandpiper <i>Tryngites subruficollis</i>	Blackpoll Warbler <i>D. striata</i>
dowitcher <i>Limnodromus</i>	White-throated Sparrow <i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i>
Little Whimbrel <i>Numenius minutus</i>	Rose-breasted Grosbeak <i>Pheucticus ludovicianus</i>
Lesser Yellowlegs <i>Tringa flavipes</i>	Bobolink <i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>
Spotted Sandpiper <i>Actitis macularia</i>	Northern Oriole <i>Icterus galbula</i>
Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	

Mystery photographs

**136** That plate 214 (repeated on page 492) shows a small wader is confirmed by the general proportions of the bird and the size of the surrounding vegetation. This provides a starting point for the identification. Since it is clearly not a small plover, it must be a *Calidris*. But small *Calidris* waders can be difficult to identify—particularly when the geographical location is not known, and thus cannot help the elimination process.



Let's start with structure. The moderate length of the near-straight bill helps to eliminate Sanderling *C. alba* (shorter bill), and Dunlin *C. alpina*, which has a rather variable-length, but generally longer, somewhat decurved bill. The tail extends just beyond the tips of the folded primaries, eliminating Baird's *C. bairdii* and White-rumped Sandpipers *C. fuscicollis* with their proportionately longer wings. This leaves us with four dark-legged stints to consider: the two species-pairs, Semipalmated *C. pusilla* and Western Sandpipers *C. mauri*, and Red-necked *C. ruficollis* and Little Stints *C. minuta*.

At this stage, we must age the bird, a straightforward-enough process, since the uniform (presumably greyish) upperparts are winter-plumage feathers. One tiny, dark, and very worn mantle feather remains, however, from this individual's juvenile or summer plumage; moreover, there is strong breast streaking, which is not a feature of juveniles of any of the four species. Thus, it must be an adult in the process of moulting from summer to winter plumage. It follows that other features of body plumage, such as the streaking on the head, may also relate to summer plumage.

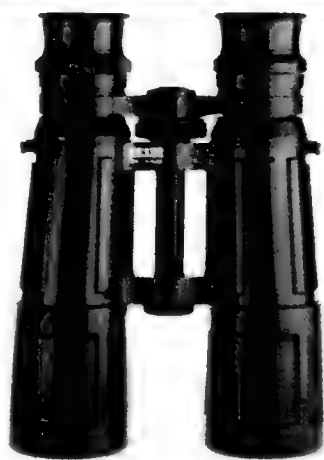
We return to structural features; those of value in separating the four species include the presence or absence of webbing between the toes (not visible in the photograph), bill length and shape, and the primary projection beyond the tertials. Western Sandpiper generally has a longish, slightly decurved bill, as have some Semipalmateds, but Little and Red-necked Stints are typically slightly shorter in the bill than our mystery bird. The primary projection is comparatively short on Western and Semipalmated Sandpipers—and in the photograph—but longer on Red-necked and Little Stints. This feature must, of course, be used with care with moulting birds.

And what about the winter upperparts? Generally, Western and Semipalmated have uniformly brownish-grey feathers with a dark shaft-

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streak (again as in the photograph); Red-necked is similar but a cleaner, paler grey, whereas Little and Red-necked Stints usually have darker feather centres. So, structural features particularly suggest that the photograph seems likely to be of either a Western or a Semipalmated Sandpiper, and that Little Stint at least can be eliminated.

Western and Semipalmated Sandpipers can often be separated on the shape and length of the bill, a 'text-book' Western having a longish, evenly tapering, almost Dunlin-like decurved bill, while Semipalmated has a shorter, near-straight, less tapered, blunt-tipped bill. This mystery individual, however, is rather intermediate in this respect, recalling the Felixstowe stint of 1982-83 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 609-621), though its bill is finer over the distal half. Other evidence must, therefore, be sought to enable an identification to be made, and a careful perusal of the photograph shows that the summer-plumage breast-streaking continues as V-shaped spots on the flanks, and perhaps on the belly. This is a feature of summer-plumage Western Sandpipers, which gives their underparts a strongly spotted appearance. Summer Semipalmated Sandpipers, in contrast, though streaked on neck, upper breast and flanks, are never so boldly marked, particularly on the breast.

The mystery bird is thus a Western Sandpiper, its relatively short bill suggesting that it is a male. I photographed it in New Jersey, USA, in September 1985.

R J C

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242. Mystery photograph 137. Identify the species. Answer next month



# Monthly marathon

Sponsored by



**H**e's done it! The second 'Monthly Marathon' has been won by Anthony McGeehan, who correctly identified the bird in plate 189. It was named by competitors as:

Tawny Pipit <i>Anthus campestris</i>	(56%)
Skylark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>	(6%)
Richard's Pipit <i>Anthus novaeseelandiae</i>	(6%)
Crested Lark <i>Galerida cristata</i>	(5%)
Short-toed Lark <i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	(4%)
Woodlark <i>Lullula arborea</i>	(4%)
Blyth's Pipit <i>A. godlewski</i>	(4%)
Dusky Thrush <i>Turdus naumanni</i>	(3%)

with a few votes each for Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes*, Dupont's Lark *Chersophilus duponti*, Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula*, Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*, Olive-backed Pipit *A. hodgsoni*, Tree Pipit *A. trivialis*, Meadow Pipit *A. pratensis*, Water Pipit *A. spinoletta*, Dunnock *Prunella modularis*, Radde's Accentor *P. ocularis*, Black-throated Accentor *P. atrogularis*, Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*, Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*, Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* and Redwing *T. iliacus*.

The extraordinarily long list of candidate species reflects how difficult it was to name an alternative if the correct answer was not immediately obvious. Those who identified it as Tawny Pipit were right, this individual being photographed in the Netherlands in December 1983 by Arnoud B. van den Berg.

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243. Third 'Monthly marathon' competition. Photograph number 3. Identify the species. Read the rules on page 49 in the January 1988 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th November 1988

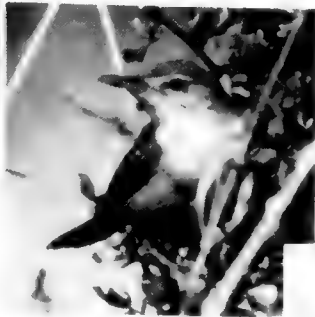




1. Red-flanked Bluetail 55%



2. Greater Yellowlegs 74%

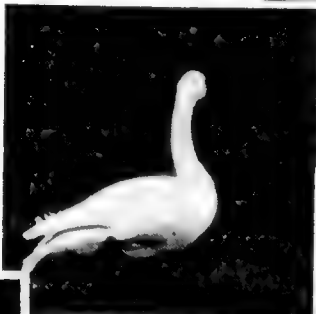


3. Upcher's Warbler 72%

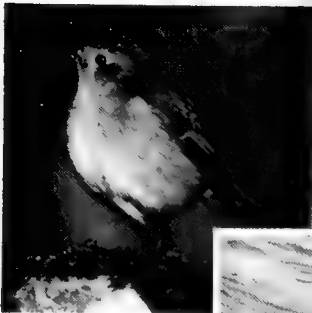
4. Red-breasted Merganser <1%



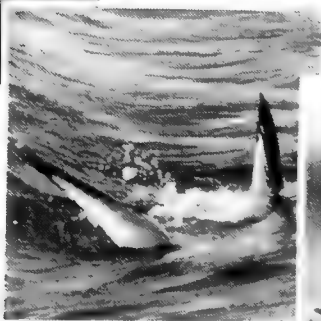
5. Marsh Sandpiper 49%



6. Bewick's Swan 77%



7. Robin 70%



8. Kittiwake 72%



9. Black Redstart 46%



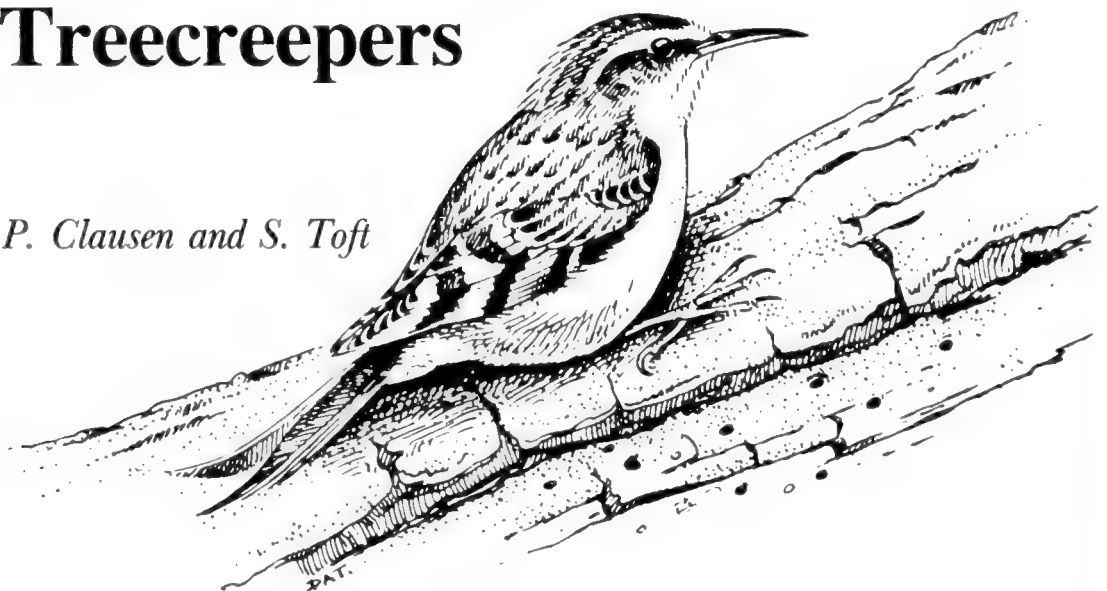
10. Tawny Pipit 56%

Anthony McGeehan's winning sequence of identifications is shown on page 495 (the percentages show the proportion of entrants who got each answer right). Anthony McGeehan, who lives in Bangor, Co. Down, will now be able to choose as his prize a SUNBIRD holiday birdwatching in Africa, Asia or North America.

With the second 'Monthly marathon' won, everybody starts on scratch with the *third* competition, in which plates 200, 215 and 243 are the first three puzzle pictures. We are delighted that the competition is again sponsored by SUNBIRD. Please read the rules (see page 49 in the January issue) before entering, but HAVE A GO NOW!

## Mixed singers and imitation singers among Short-toed Treecreepers

*P. Clausen and S. Toft*



**T**he identification of treecreepers *Certhia* has been a popular theme for discussion for many decades. In connection with the first British record of Short-toed Treecreeper *C. brachydactyla* (Scott 1976), Mead & Wallace (1976) gave a comprehensive treatment of the distinctions between Short-toed and Common Treecreepers\* *C. familiaris* and also reviewed much of the literature on treecreeper identification. Mead & Wallace (1976) considered differences in the song patterns of the two species to be useful in identification, although care needed to be taken owing to occasional 'mixed singing' by Common Treecreepers.

The present paper offers some of our findings in relation to the song behaviour of the two species in Denmark. In particular, we wish to

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\*For the purposes of unambiguous and easy reading, the Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* is referred to throughout this text as Common Treecreeper.

propose a distinction between two types of mixed singers among treecreepers.

## Methods

During 1979-84, a survey was conducted which showed the Short-toed Treecreeper to be more numerous and widespread in Denmark than previously believed (Clausen & Madsen 1986). Many Short-toed Treecreepers were identified by song and by certain distinct calls (Thielcke 1964), as well as by the plumage details proposed by Osieck (1975), Mead & Wallace (1976) and Hirschfeld (1984), namely indistinct short supercilia; dull greyish upperparts; and dirty grey underparts (most Danish individuals having only the throat pure white).

Some individuals were tape-recorded as documentation for the Danish Rarities Committee. The voices of Common Treecreepers were also recorded during 1984-86, for comparison. All recordings were filtered through a JVC S.E.A. 80 graphic equaliser, attenuating frequencies below 2 kHz by 24 dB, and analysed on a Voiceprint 700 sonagraph, using the wide (300 Hz) filter and high-shape setting. All sonagrams presented here (figs. 2 & 3) are tracings. The bio-acoustical terminology used follows the definitions given by Bondesen & Davis (1966) and Bondesen (1979).

## Results

### *Habitat and distribution, present and past*

In Denmark, the Common Treecreeper is indeed common (10,000-100,000 breeding pairs: Dybbro 1978), and is also widely distributed (fig. 1). It occurs in broadleaved as well as coniferous forests and parks, probably having done so for more than 8,000 years (Løppenthin 1967).

The Short-toed Treecreeper is rarer than the Common Treecreeper, having an estimated population in Denmark of only 250-300 breeding pairs (Clausen & Madsen 1986). Although more limited in distribution than Common (fig. 1), it has expanded its range in Denmark considerably during the present century. Short-toed is also more restricted in habitat, preferring old and open broadleaved forests and parks, in particular those with plentiful oaks *Quercus*.

### *Songs*

Most treecreepers showed song characters similar to those described by Mead & Wallace (1976). A few Common Treecreepers, however, had considerably shorter song phrases than average (fig. 2h): they omitted or abbreviated one of the two nearly identical trills of the normal phrase (cf. fig. 2g), this resulting in a time duration similar to that of Short-toed. Seven cases of unusual singing by Short-toed Treecreepers were recorded: in five of these, individuals showed characteristics of mixed singing, and in two other cases Short-toeds imitated the song of Common.

## MIXED SINGING

For treecreepers, we define mixed singing as song containing a repertoire

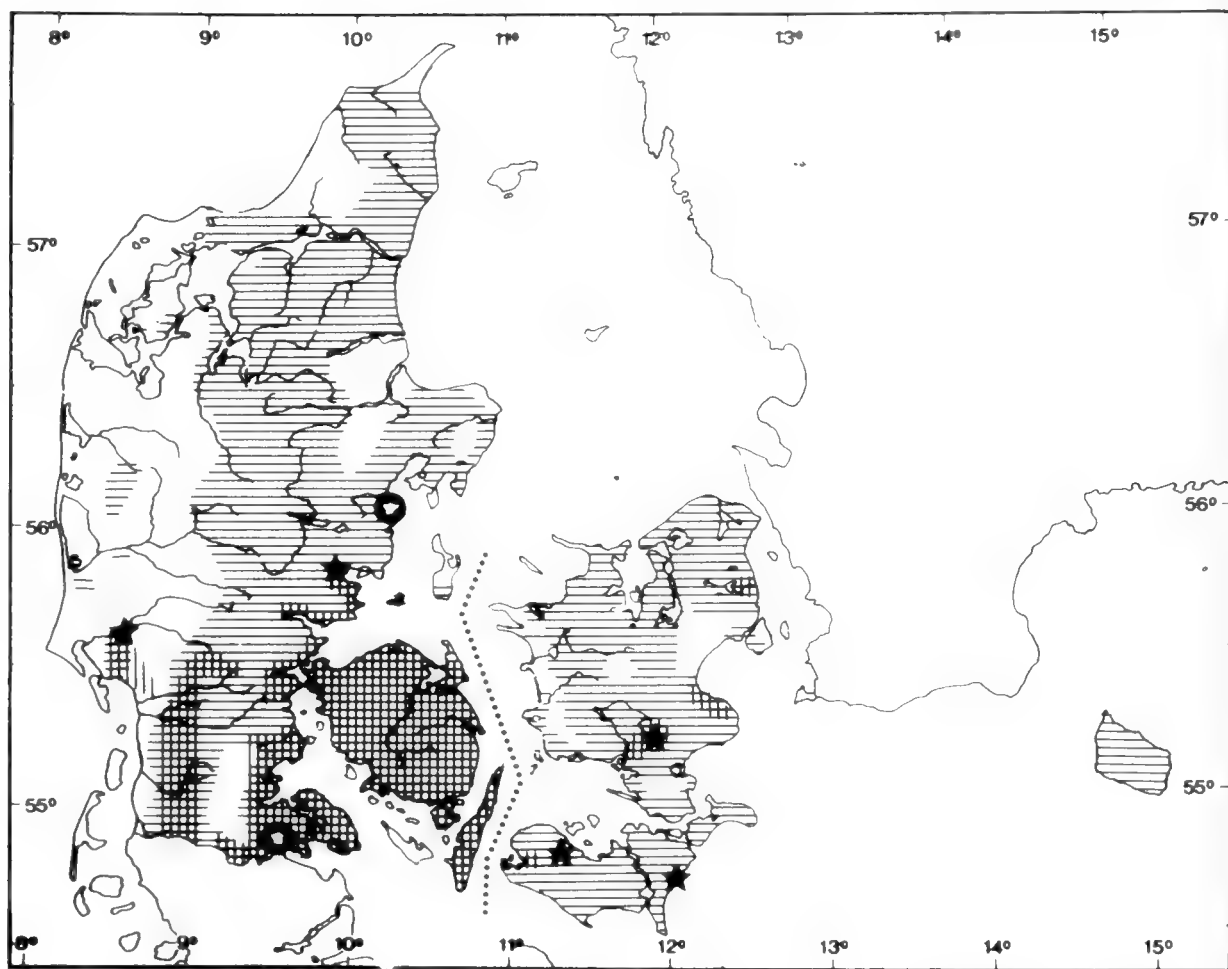


Fig. 1. The present distribution of treecreepers *Certhia* in Denmark. Horizontal hatching = Common Treecreeper *C. familiaris* (after Dybbro 1976 and Møller 1978). Vertical hatching = Short-toed Treecreeper *C. brachydactyla* (after Clausen & Madsen 1986); east to the Store Bælt (dotted line) Short-toed is rare (only one proven case of breeding). Black stars indicate sites where mixed-singing Short-toed were recorded. White stars within black circles indicate sites where imitation singers were recorded: the northernmost the two Short-toed at Moesgaard; the southernmost Gråsten, where a Common Treecreeper was induced to imitate Short-toed (see 'Discussion')

of phrases that includes figures from the repertoires of both species, given either in a single phrase (e.g. fig. 2d) or separately (e.g. figs. 2e-f), but lacking a fully developed normal song phrase of the species itself that is singing. All the mixed singers encountered were identified as Short-toed by their 'rival-calls' (cf. fig. 2b) and plumage coloration.

The first individual was recorded on 26th March 1983, in Manor Pederstrup Park, Isle of Lolland. It had a mixed phrase consisting of three initial figures of the normal Short-toed phrase, followed by a Common-like trill as well as the final figure of the Common phrase (fig. 2d). It also gave a 'staccato-song' (*sensu* Schwerdtfeger & Thielcke 1986) consisting of only three figures, very much like the first three in fig. 2f. Staccato-songs are easily recognisable, and are apparent in the song repertoires of most Short-toed Treecreepers in Denmark (P. Clausen, unpublished). During our observations, this individual fought a Common Treecreeper, and so we were able to compare directly the plumages of the two as they climbed the same tree trunk, just 60 cm apart: both showed their respective

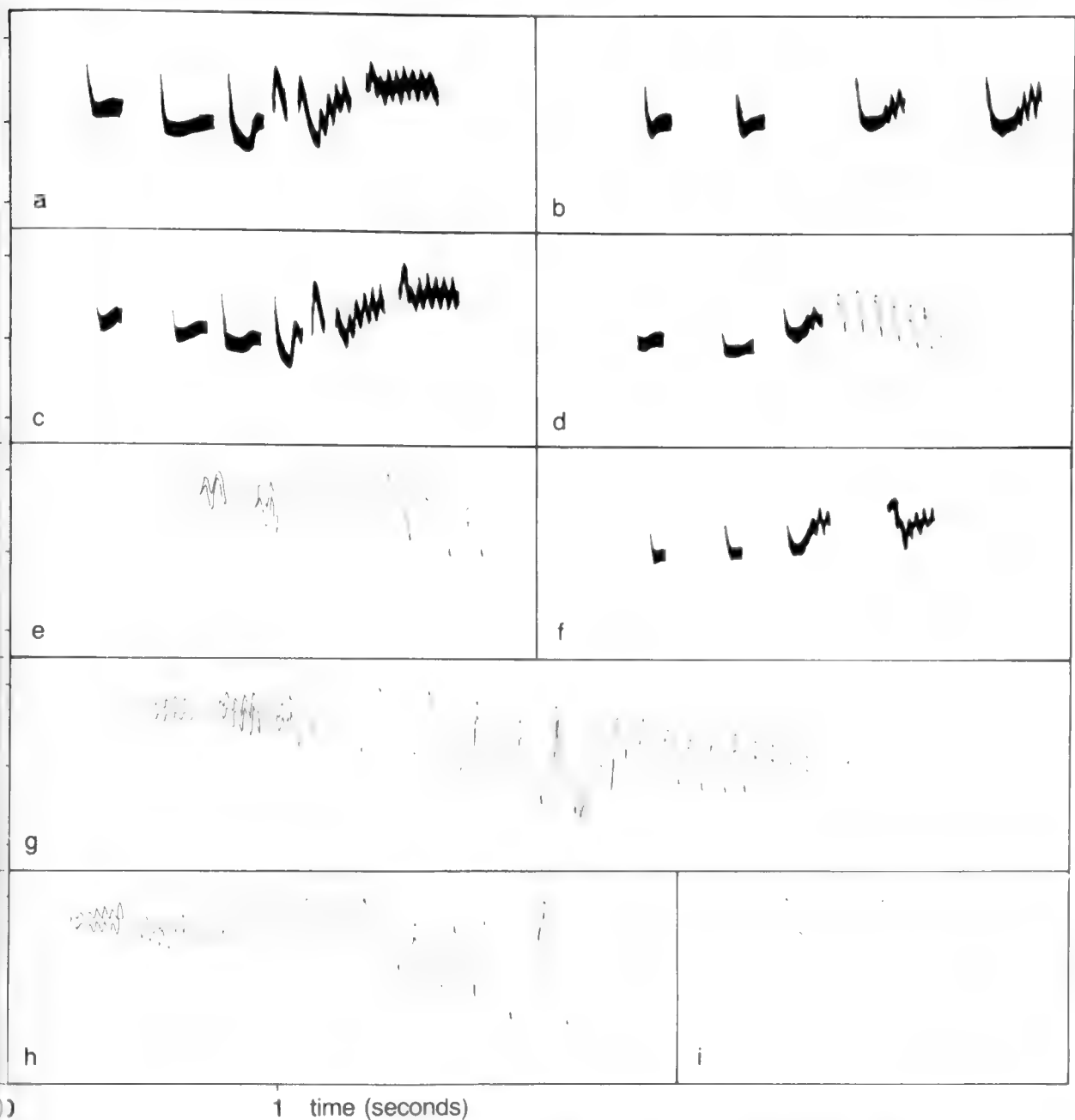


Fig. 2. Sonograms of voices of Danish treecreepers *Certhia*. a-f = Short-toed *C. brachydactyla*: a & c, two examples of normal song phrases; b, two each of the two distinct rival-calls, used in identification (see Thielcke 1964); d, the mixed phrase of one individual; e & f, the mixed song repertoire of another individual. g-i = Common Treecreeper *C. familiaris*: g, an example of normal song phrase; h, a very short phrase; i, the distinct rival-call, used in identification (see Thielcke 1964). Solid and outline traces on the sonograms indicate figures derived from the normal repertoires of, respectively, Short-toed and Common Treecreepers. See text

species' characters, and the Common Treecreeper sang a phrase typical of its species.

The second mixed-singing Short-toed Treecreeper was tape-recorded on 27th March 1983, in Manor Corselitze Park, Isle of Falster. It had a very short phrase of six elements (fig. 2e), the whole of which appears to be derived from the central parts of the song phrase of Common Treecreeper. It also had a staccato-song of four elements (fig. 2f).

Neither of the above two individuals uttered fully developed Short-toed



phrases of 6-7 figures; nor did the three Short-toeds that gave mixed singing, but were not tape-recorded. One of the latter, at Bregentved, Isle of Sjælland, on 1st April 1983, had a mixed song of approximately two seconds' duration; this sounded as if it was begun and terminated with normal Short-toed figures, but included a Common Treecreeper trill of 5-7 figures. One individual, observed on 1st May 1983 at Varde, southwest Jutland, had a song pattern quite like that of the Pederstrup Short-toed. Finally, the third Short-toed, at Horsens, eastern Jutland, on 6th February 1985, had a song pattern like that of the Bregentved individual.

#### IMITATION SINGING

Two Short-toed Treecreepers had a quite normal species-specific phrase, as well as giving an imitation of Common Treecreeper (fig. 3). At no time did they mix the song figures and, moreover, they both had a fully developed phrase of their own species. We therefore distinguish these individuals from the mixed singers and call them 'imitation singers' (see discussion).

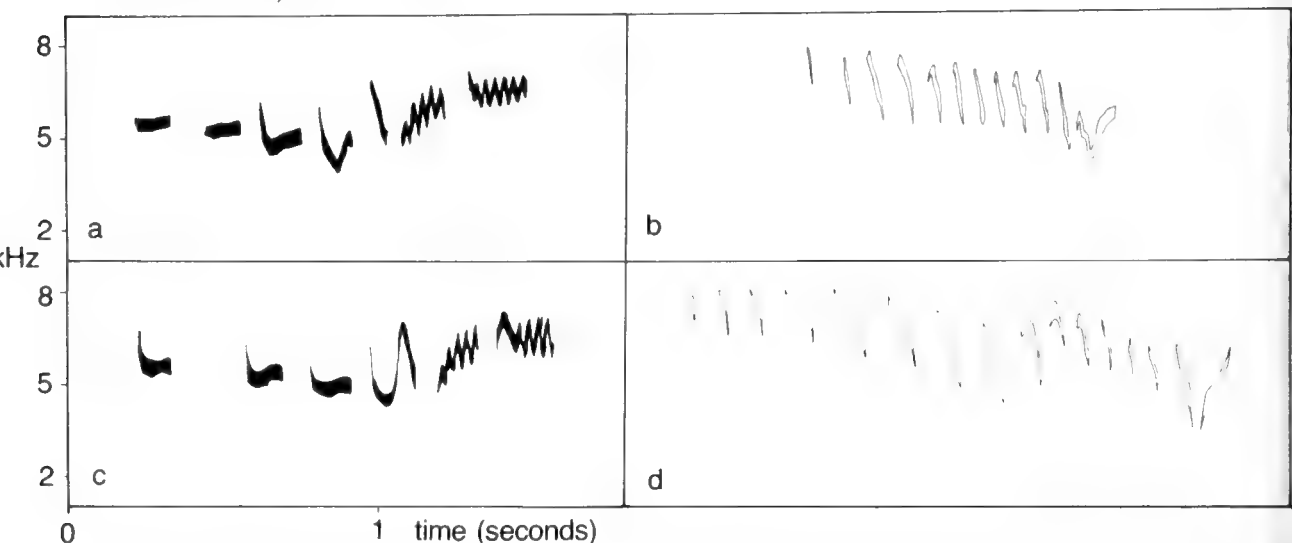


Fig. 3. Repertoires of two Short-toed Treecreepers *Certhia brachydactyla* giving imitation song, recorded at Moesgaard, Denmark. a & b, the 1983 individual; c & d, the 1984 individual. a & c show the normal Short-toed phrases, and b & d the imitations of phrases of Common Treecreeper *C. familiaris*. For explanation of traces, see fig. 2. See also text

Both imitation singers were recorded at Moesgaard, near Aarhus, eastern Jutland, the first in April-June 1983 and the second in April-September 1984. We believe them to be different individuals because of the differences between their normal (Short-toed) phrases (figs. 3a & 3c), as well as their different imitations (figs. 3b & 3d), the 1984 male singing an almost perfect imitation of Common Treecreeper. This second male was caught and measured on 26th April, its bill-to-skull measurement being 19.7 mm and the hindclaw 8.3 mm; using both Svensson's (1970) ratio and Mead & Wallace's (1976) discriminant, this bird can be identified as a Short-toed Treecreeper.

#### Discussion

##### *Mixed singing*

Mixed singing by treecreepers was described as early as the end of the last

century (review by Schwerdtfeger & Thielcke 1986). It was not, however, until 1960 that a more detailed description, involving the use of tape-recording and sonographic techniques, was made (Thielcke 1960). Thielcke (1972) stated that only Common Treecreeper appeared to demonstrate this phenomenon and that those individuals previously considered to be mixed-singing Short-toed might in fact have been misidentified Common Treecreepers. Despite this, Schwerdtfeger & Thielcke (1986) published the 'first' record of mixed singing by a German Short-toed Treecreeper, from the Harz area. In West Germany, mixed singing is, however, still far more frequent among Common Treecreepers than among Short-toed.

From Thielcke's extensive studies on treecreeper vocalisations, it is evident that (i) juvenile Short-toeds must at least learn part of their song from conspecifics, and they probably distinguish between conspecifics and heterospecifics by their rival-calls, which are assumed to be innate (Thielcke 1984a); and that (ii) a similar situation seems to exist with Common Treecreeper, which, under the influence of Short-toed and isolated from learning from a conspecific 'tutor', does, however, evolve a mixed song pattern (Thielcke 1960, 1972, 1986). The development of mixed singing could also be expected from Short-toed Treecreepers when isolated from conspecifics.

For the Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* and the Firecrest *R. ignicapillus*, Becker (1977) proposed a mechanism by which the individual learns by choosing as tutor a conspecific if available, and the sibling species if the former is unavailable. This leads to the assumption that the mixed-singing species in an area of sympatry should be the less numerous of the sibling pair. This seems to work also for the treecreepers. For example, Common is the mixed singer in West Germany, where Short-toed is by far the more numerous and where Common has its westernmost range limits on the Continent (apart from scattered populations in France and the Pyrénées: Yeatman 1976). In Denmark, the situation is reversed: Short-toed is the mixed singer, here at its northernmost limits, where Common is the abundant species.

According to this theory, a treecreeper giving mixed singing in Britain is more likely to be a dispersing Short-toed than a Common, particularly as the latter species is resident in Britain (Flegg 1973) and thus has few, if any, chances to learn song elements of Short-toed.

How mixed-singing Short-toed Treecreepers have evolved in the vicinity of Paris (Chappuis 1976) remains unclear. As yet, there are few proven records of Common Treecreeper around Paris, whereas Short-toed is abundant (Yeatman 1976).

#### *Imitation singing*

Juveniles of both treecreeper species, when hand-raised, develop songs highly different from those of their respective species in the wild (Thielcke 1970, 1984a, b). If song behaviour during hand-raising can be taken to reflect that in natural situations, this implies little likelihood that a Short-toed Treecreeper, isolated from learning from conspecifics, would develop

the normal song phrase of 6-7 figures that is found in its wild populations. Imitation singers among Short-toed Treecreepers have a fully developed Short-toed phrase, and we therefore interpret these as individuals which have had a conspecific tutor, but have also learned from Common Treecreeper.

We believe imitations to have a functional explanation. In both cases of imitation singing by Short-toeds, the individuals involved had male Common Treecreepers in neighbouring territories. The two species are interspecifically territorial in Denmark (J. Madsen, unpublished; personal observations), a phenomenon reported also from Lower Saxony (Schnebel 1972). Further, the 1984 imitation-singing male was polygynous, having both a Short-toed female and a Common female nesting in his territory (unfortunately, neither nest was successful). Thus, imitations may be used 'consciously' to communicate with members of the other species.

In support of this interpretation, we can also report a case of induced imitation by a Common Treecreeper, observed by J. Madsen and S. Toft at Gråsten, southern Jutland, in June 1983. This bird responded eagerly to play-back of Short-toed song phrases: at first it was singing its own species' normal song, but after a short time it started to modify this and gradually, over about five minutes, the song was changed into a seemingly perfect imitation of Short-toed. Clearly, in this case, the imitation was directed at an apparent intruding rival, by 'speaking the same language' as that rival.

## Acknowledgments

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## Summary

A survey in Denmark during 1979-84 showed Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* to be more common than previously realised, although occupying a more restricted habitat than the abundant Common Treecreeper *C. familiaris*. Tape-recordings were made of individuals of both species. 'Mixed singing' by Short-toed (song containing elements of both species' normal songs, but lacking any fully developed phrase of the species' own song) was noted from five individuals, and 'imitation singing' (imitation of Common Treecreeper, but including a fully developed phrase of its own species' song) from two. Both types of singing are described. It would appear that mixed singing evolves in an area of sympatry, whereby the less numerous of two sibling species learns from the more abundant species. It is suggested that imitation singing may be used 'consciously' to communicate with members of the other species (the two treecreeper species are interspecifically territorial in Denmark).

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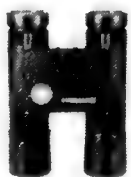
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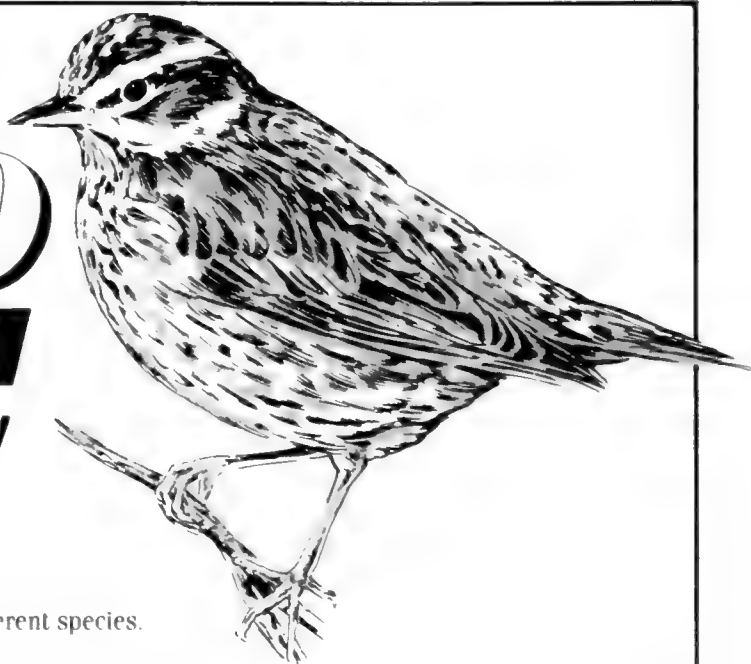


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During the 18 years which have elapsed since the first edition of this book, the birdwatching scene in Britain has changed beyond recognition. The number of birdwatchers has increased many fold and the percentage travelling abroad is much larger. It is the latter group that will find John Gooders' new book most useful. He has widened the scope from the original strictly European limit to include Morocco, Israel, Turkey, Cyprus and Crete, thereby covering all of the popular Western Palearctic birdwatching destinations.

For each country, the locations of sites are shown on a map, then the sites are listed alphabetically, each one described in a few paragraphs, and then the species of most interest are listed according to season. A paragraph headed 'Access' describes the layout, and a shorter one headed 'Route' covers the site's location, with maps for each of the larger or more complicated ones.

The author, who acknowledges the help of many people, has drawn widely on the trip reports produced by travelling birdwatchers (understandably, for no single birdwatcher could possibly know every site in each of the countries covered well enough to write such a guide solely from personal knowledge). This has led to very detailed and generally accurate accounts, but the author has to assume that everything found in such trip reports is correct and up to date; unfortunately this is not always the case. Checking Israel—as the country I probably know best within the region covered—I found the three site maps fairly accurate, although there were a few errors on the Eilat map (e.g. the captions for the sewage-ponds and the salt-works are transposed; and the ringing station has been in the North Fields, not near the date palms, for some years). The Access sections are clear and very accurate: the only error which I could find also related to Eilat, where a railway station is mentioned in mistake for the ringing station: potentially confusing for a first-time visitor.

Most of the species lists are accurate, but again a few errors have crept in, for example, Great Snipe *Gallinago media*, Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris*, Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria* and Finsch's Wheatear *Oenanthe finschii* should not be included in the summer list for the Lake Tiberius area. The snipe is a rare passage migrant and the other three are winter visitors, the first two of which are very rare. Maybe I am nit-picking, but a book of this kind is meant to be used both before and during a birdwatching holiday, so the information it contains should be absolutely accurate. Errors such as the ones outlined above could result in people wasting precious time looking for species that they have little or no chance of seeing at the time of year of their visit.

Most of the information in the book is reliable, however, and will undoubtedly be of enormous help to anyone planning a birdwatching trip to one of the countries covered. The author appeals for anyone using the book to inform him of any information that needs updating and to supply him with copies of their trip reports, so hopefully the next edition should be even more accurate.

DAVID FISHER

**Birdwatching with Bill Oddie.** By Bill Oddie. Macmillan Press, London & Basingstoke, 1988. 194 pages; 49 black-and-white plates; 87 line-drawings. £8.95.

I have, first of all, to admit that I am an Oddie fan. But, then, if you are not, you probably wouldn't buy this book anyway. Not only is his name in the title and his picture on the cover, but every sentence and every drawing vibrates with Oddieisms. And wonderful it all is, too!

The book aims to tell the beginner birdwatcher all the things which he needs to know before he gets started and during those first few frustrating months when a 'female House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* might have been a Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*' and you imagined that the best place to see an Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* was the RSPB Headquarters at Sandy. No field guide gives the information provided here by Bill Oddie. There are other books (some very good) which give advice to beginner birdwatchers, but there is none which does so with the wit, thoroughness and sheer enthusiasm of this one. Start reading at the beginning of the book and, even if you are an experienced birdwatcher (something which this book aims to help you to become), it is difficult not to keep on reading until you reach the end. The text bowls along at a cracking pace, rather in the way that one might imagine Bill Oddie (laden down with binoculars, telescope, tripod and rucksack) heading for some distant warbler-filled undergrowth on an October morn.

This book is great fun. Any beginner who reads it will receive a lot of useful advice, but perhaps it is the old-hands (and if you are reading a review in *British Birds*, that probably includes you) who will appreciate just how sound the advice is. As I read this text, my chuckles of amusement were interspersed with thoughts of 'How true!' as some gem of Bill Oddie's wisdom struck a mental chord from my own birdwatching experiences.

Unless you think that birdwatching shouldn't be fun, or that ornithology and humour do not mix, buy a copy of this book for yourself, and also one for anyone (old or young) who you know is just starting out in the birdwatching game. Bill Oddie is a professional communicator, and more than anything else this book communicates the enjoyment which one can get from birdwatching. That's a splendid message for everyone, beginner and 'expert' alike.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

## Seventy-five years ago...

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'PARENT-BIRDS REMOVING MATTER FROM THE GAPES OF NESTLINGS. For some years now I have been paying particular attention to the nestlings of common birds. It is of course now known to all ornithologists that the parents keep the nest clean (as a general rule) by carrying away the excrement and often by swallowing it, during the early part of the nestling-period. While watching these operations I noticed that, after feeding the young, the old birds almost always examined the gapes of the nestlings and often removed something from them. It was not at all easy to come to a conclusion as to what was removed, for it was usually impossible to obtain anything for examination, especially as most of the parent-birds swallowed what they removed. I feel convinced, however, that what is removed is either food which the nestling has not swallowed, or it is undigested matter that has returned to the gape . . . Unfortunately my time is too limited to enable me to investigate this matter thoroughly, and I only wish to suggest that here is an interesting little problem for ornithologists to solve. J. H. OWEN.' (*Brit. Birds* 7:140-141, October 1913)

## Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs

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**W**e normally view the black-and-white pictures submitted for this feature immediately after judging the 'Bird Photograph of the Year' competition.

With our minds still reeling from a plethora of stunning coloured images, one might imagine that our view of simpler, monochrome images would be dulled. Not so. We always seem to expect the standard and volume of black-and-white submissions to fall, but it never does. On the contrary, this style of work appears to be gaining in strength compared with recent years and, as we have done before, we would exhort all of you who have not tried to give it a go. There is a huge added satisfaction in watching an image that you have created completely grow in front of your eyes in the developing dish.

At its best, black-and-white photography can be visually overwhelming in a way that colour never is, being camouflaged by its own richness. The simplicity of the monochrome image allows fiercer criticism, and forces the photographer to develop technical and aesthetic skills to wring the best, tonally and compositionally, from the negative. Do not regard black-and-white work as the poor relation. Far from it. It can hold its head up in any company.

We must comment that the general standard of print production is not what it used to be, but we are sure that this is due to the use of the ubiquitous, resin-coated 'paper', probably with multigrade characteristics. The most revealing comparison was afforded by Tony Bond's Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* (plate 244). We guess that it was printed on *Galerie*, a 'real' paper and, as such, it stood out head and shoulders, hoisted there by its superb tonal range. Our other selection of Tony's was his delightful Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* (plate 245). Afficionados will already realise that this is Tony Bond's tenth successive year of selection in this feature.

Richard T. Mills has no fewer than three pictures selected, and appears for his third successive year; his fourth in total. All of the standard we have come to expect of him, his pictures of Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*, Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*, and Curlews *Numenius arquata* and Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* at roost exhibit his versatility in using three totally different techniques. Blue Tits rarely sit still and do the photographer's bidding, so this one among early-spring catkins (plate 246) has been beautifully captured with a 600-mm lens and well-balanced flash. In direct contrast is the vagrant Wilson's Phalarope (plate 247), which is either stretching luxuriously or swearing vigorously. The group of Curlews and Oystercatchers at a high-water roost in a flower-filled meadow (plate 249) was obtained by remote control, using the now-familiar technique of a relatively short lens (85 mm) at close range to give great depth of focus.

A. R. Hamblin features for the third time, and second successive year, with a fine shot of a pair of Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* at their Spanish nest. This lovely picture (plate 248) exhibits all the classical and traditional values of the British bird-photographer: male and female at the nest, showing the young, all sharp, well exposed and composed, and perfectly 'gardenised'. Good stuff!

The first of our new names is Paul van Gaalen from the Netherlands, with two photographs. One is of Common Sandpipers *Actitis hypoleucos* resting before continuing their autumn migration (plate 250). In his notes he tells us that the hide was erected two months before the birds arrived. The other, of Bewick's Swans *Cygnus columbianus* (plate 253), was photographed in the Netherlands at the hauntingly named 'Outer Marches of the Black Water'. With such a photograph, it is easy to imagine the music of their bugling.

Also from the Netherlands, and a newcomer to this feature, is Arnoud B. van den Berg, with a perfect study of a juvenile Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (plate 251). Superbly executed, this photograph would merit publication even if it were of a much more common species.

Though he is no stranger to the pages of this journal, Paul Doherty's Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* provides his first inclusion in this feature.

244. Female Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, Lancashire, June 1987 (Tony Bond) (Canon A1; 300mm Canon; FP4; f5.6, 1/125th)

245. Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Merseyside, December 1987 (Tony Bond) (Canon A1; 300mm Canon; XP 1; 1/125th Auto)





246. Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*, Co. Cork, March 1987 (*Richard T. Mills*) (Nikon FE2; Nikkor 600mm; TRI X; F22; 1/250th plus flash)

247. Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*, Co. Cork, August 1987 (*Richard T. Mills*) (Nikon FE2; Nikkor 600mm; TRI X; f5.6; 1/1000th)

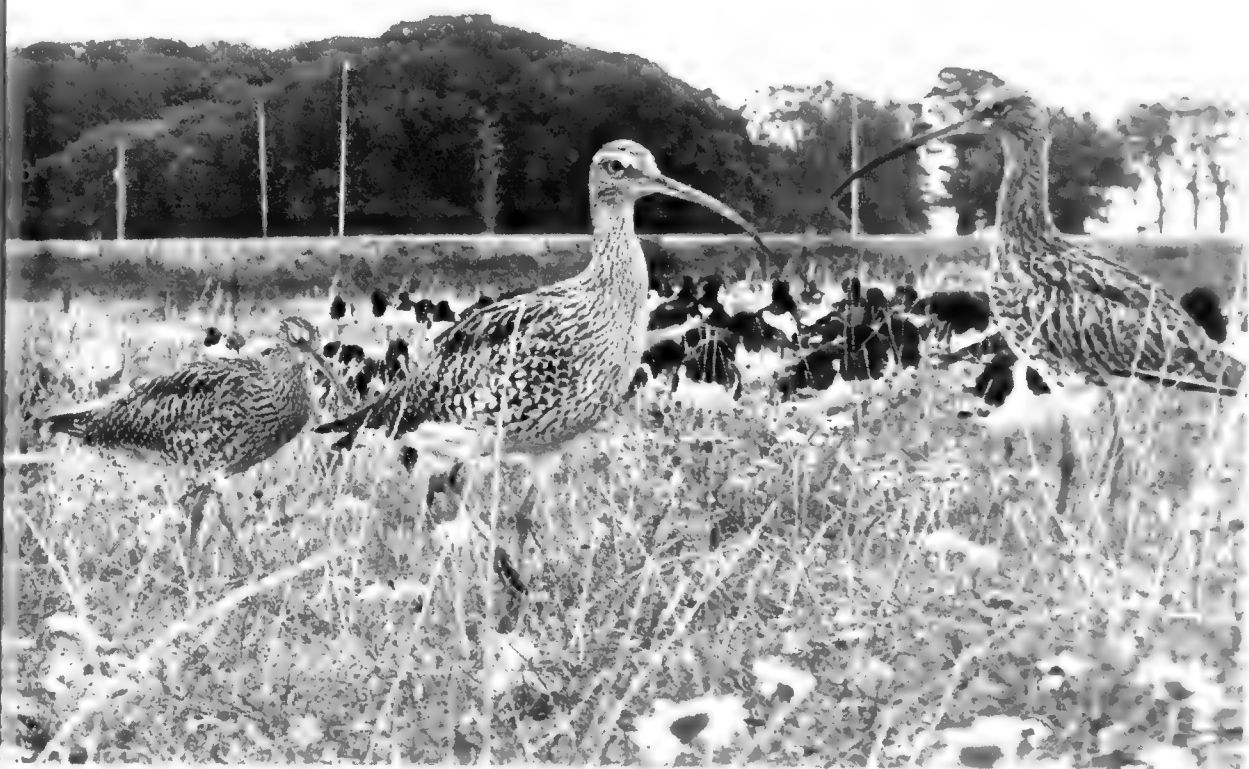






248. Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* at nest with young, Spain, August 1986 (A. R. Hamblin)  
(FP4, f11.5 at 1/30th with flash)

249. Curlews *Numenius arquata* and Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*, Co. Cork (Richard T. Mills)  
(Nikon FE2; Nikkor 85mm; TRI X; f11 on Auto by remote control)







250. Common Sandpipers *Actitis hypoleucos*, Netherlands, August 1987 (Paul van Gaalen) (Nikon FE2; Leitz Telyt 400mm; T. Max 400)

252. Top right, juvenile Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Israel, December 1987 (Paul Doherty) (Nikon FE; Nikkor 400mm with 2× Converter; T-Max 100, 1/250th, f8)

253. Bottom right, Bewick's Swans *Cygnus columbianus*, Netherlands, February 1987 (Paul van Gaalen) (Nikon FE2; Leitz Telyt 400mm)

251. Juvenile Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*, Netherlands, September 1987 (Arnoud B. van den Berg) (Leicaflex SL; Novoflex 400mm; XPI; 1/250)







254. Spotted Flycatchers *Muscicapa striata* at nest, Cornwall, July 1987 (G. Cockill) (Canon AE1P; Canon 200mm; XP1; f16; 1/60th with 2 flash heads)

255. Male Rock Bunting *Emberiza ca* at nest with young, Portugal, June 1987 (Kevin & Christine Carlson) (Nikon F; Vivitar zoom 70-210mm; FP1; f16; 1/60th with flash)



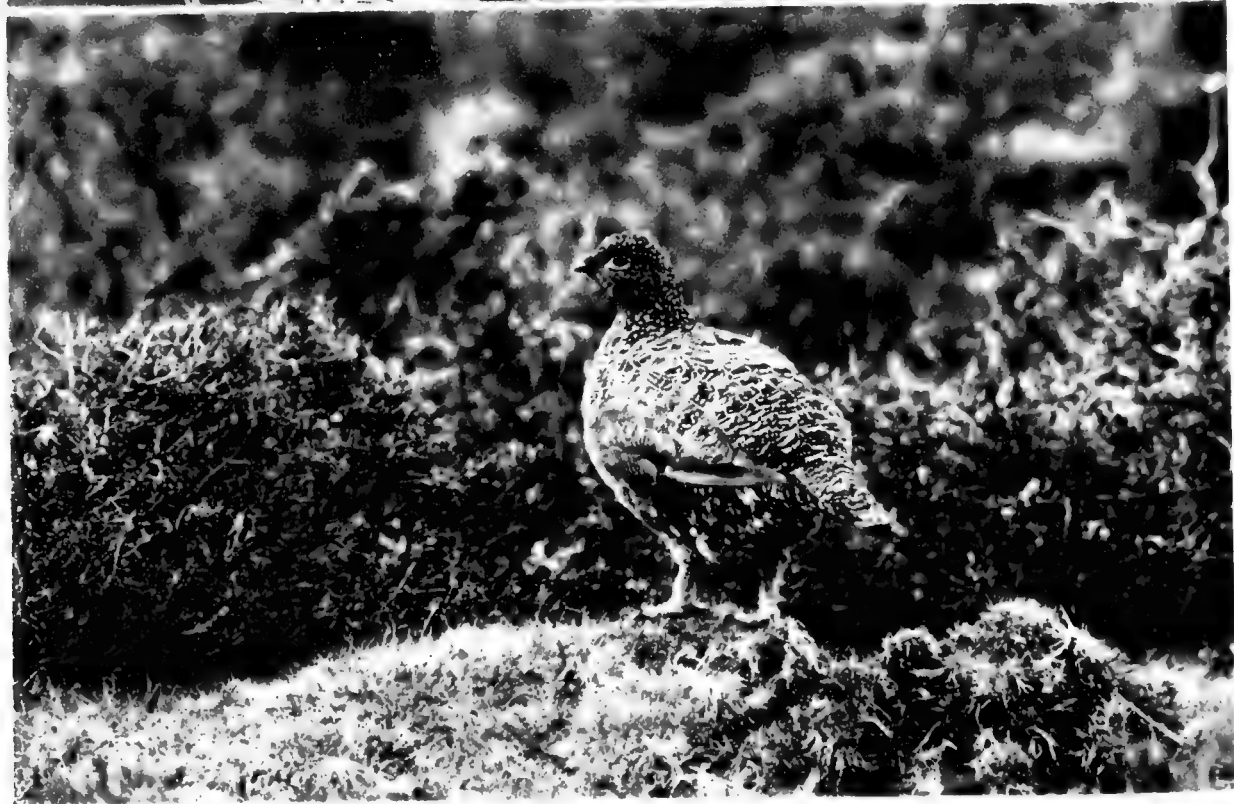


256. Pair of Purple Herons *Ardea purpurea* changing over at nest with young, Portugal, May 1987 (Kevin & Christine Carlson) (Nikon FE; Nikkor AF Zoom 70-210mm; FP4; f8; 1/125th)

257. Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*, Netherlands, June 1984 (Hans Schouten) (Nikon FE; Nikkor 400mm ED; FP4; f5.6; 1/125th)







Taken in Israel, his excellent picture (plate 252) shows well the plumage features of this juvenile.

Yet another first-timer is G. Cockill from Cornwall, whose Spotted Flycatchers *Muscicapa striata* (plate 254) illustrates perfectly a typical nest of the species in a natural setting.

Neither 'Bird Photograph of the Year' nor this feature would be complete without a picture from Kevin Carlson, so here up he pops again (for the *seventeenth* time!) with two pictures bearing his superb technical and aesthetic hallmarks. Both photographs were taken in his preferred hunting ground of Portugal, and show quite magnificently a Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia* at its nest (plate 255) and a pair of Purple Herons *Ardea purpurea* changing over at their nest (plate 256). This latter picture is one of a magnificent series, one of which we have already had the opportunity to admire in colour (plate 135).

Hans Schouten is also no stranger to us. From the Netherlands, Hans qualifies for the third occasion, and his second successive year. His photograph this time is a fine portrait of a summer-plumaged Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* (plate 257), with the droplets of water from a recent dive still visible on its back and neck.

Finally, but far from least, and for the fifth successive year, we have Mark Hamblin, this time with two photographs. One shows a Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* carrying food for its young, in typical stance upon vegetation near its nest (plate 258); and the other a Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus* standing proud against a heather backdrop (plate 259).

We are confident that you will agree that this twenty-ninth selection of 'Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs' shows that there is a lot of life in the medium yet. Indeed, of those selected, seven are of species not previously included: Black-necked Grebe, Night Heron, Bewick's Swan, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope, Ring-billed Gull and Rock Bunting. By contrast, Kestrel and Curlew are both represented for the seventh time, and Common Sandpiper for the sixth.

Of the ten photographers, four appear for the first time, though we are sure not for the last. We are already looking forward avidly to next year's entries.

DON SMITH, R. J. CHANDLER, ERIC HOSKING and  
J. T. R. SHARROCK

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258. Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*, Warwickshire, July 1987 (Mark Hamblin) (Pentax 300mm; FP4; f8; 1/125th)

259. Female Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*, North Yorkshire, April 1987 (Mark Hamblin) (Pentax MX; Novoflex 400mm; FP4; f5.6; 1/60th)

# News and comment

Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'



260. First 'Monthly marathon' winner, Pekka Nikander, on SUNBIRD trip to Thailand, February 1988 (Jon Dunn)

**Pekka's prize** The winner of the first 'Monthly marathon', Pekka Nikander, chose as his prize a SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday in Thailand. With his interest in the identification of Asiatic vagrants to Europe and the Middle East, Pekka naturally concentrated on the Palearctic migrants which are such a feature of winter in Thailand. We gather that he notched up more than a dozen species of *Phylloscopus* warbler and that at midday—when everyone else tends to sip a drink and have a siesta in the shade—Pekka was to be seen lying in the grass watching Lanceolated Warblers *Locustella lanceolata* or lurking half inside some bushes comparing Dusky Warblers *P. fuscatus* and Radde's Warblers *P. schwarzi*.

**BBRC Identification Meeting** The Rarities Committee has an annual meeting in spring to discuss policy and other general matters. In most years, a second meeting is held to research identification problems which are mostly related to the Committee's current work. The latest such meeting was held on 9th July 1988 at the British Museum (Natural History) at Tring, where all relevant skins were made available for study. On several occasions, field characters were also clarified by reference to slides. Most of the species discussed produced very useful information: adult Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* (compared with adult Little Egret *E. garzetta*), eclipse male, adult female and first-winter Falcated Duck *Anas falcata*, eclipse male, adult female and first-winter Blue-winged Teal *A. discors* (compared with equivalent age and sex of Cinnamon Teal *A. cyanoptera*), Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens* (compared with Short-toed Lark *C. brachydactyla*), Naumann's Thrush *Turdus naumanni naumanni*, Two-barred Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus* (compared with Greenish Warbler *P. trochiloides* and Green Warbler *P. nitidus*), Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* (compared with Crossbill *L. curvirostra*), and autumn male Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*. Some progress was made with adult Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* of the races *nycticorax* and *hoactli*, Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (compared with Reed Warbler *A. scirpaceus* of the races *scirpaceus* and *fuscus* and Marsh Warbler *A. palustris*), adult male Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* of the races *cantillans* and *albistriata*, Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* of the eastern race *humei*, and adult Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* of the races *senator* and *badius*. Other agenda items covered more briefly involved first-summer Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* and Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*. The skins, slides and stimulating discussion made for a very interesting, constructive and informative day. (Contributed by P. G. Lansdown)

**'Country Life'/RSNC County Birdwatch** The stunning success of the 'South Lakes A' team from Cumbria (plate 261) surprised





261. 'South Lakes A' team, winners of 1988 *Country Life*/RSNC County Birdwatch: left to right, Steve Dodgson, Roy Bottomley, Ian Kinley and Gary Agar (David Tomlinson)

the judges in the third *Country Life*/Royal Society for Nature Conservation County Birdwatch: Steve Dodgson, Roy Bottomley, Ian Kinley and Gary Agar recorded 138 species in 24 hours, to achieve 95.83% of their target figure. This gave the Cumbrian team first place, and they won the *Country Life* Barn Owl trophy, plus a cheque for £500 for their county trust. In second place was another Cumbrian team, with the Wiltshire 'Great Bustards' third and also the highest-placed inland county.

This year, 99 teams entered the event, and results were received from over 90. Some 232 species of birds were recorded by the competing teams, including Little Egret, Falcated Duck, Bonelli's Warbler, Thrush Nightingale, Ring-billed Gull (found by Bill Oddie, who was a member of the fourth-placed 'Chairman's Oddities' team from Dorset), Crane and Bluethroat. Rather more than £20,000 was raised by the event for the British Wildlife Appeal. Two teams raised over £2,000: the 'High Tech Hawks' from Shropshire and the Dorset Trust for Nature Conservation team, and they shared the Barbour trophy (plus a cheque for £500).

Plans for next year are already in hand, and include a radical rethink of the handicap system, based on the results of the competition's first three years, while there is also the possibility that the Birdwatch will be held on a choice of two May weekends, allowing for the fact that the peak date for seeing the maximum number of birds in a

day is much earlier in the South than in the North.

#### Conservation action in Málaga province

Further to our report on conservation action in Andalucia (BB 81: 246), the biologist in charge of Fuente de Piedra (Málaga province), Manuel Rendon, and Andy Paterson tell us that action and capital spending on protection is high on the list of priorities of the Environment Agency, AMA (Agencia del Medio Ambiente). A comprehensive protection law is being drawn up, which aims to protect all remaining wetlands in Andalucia, either through site purchase or by full agreement with the proprietors. Within Málaga province alone, AMA already owns Fuente de Piedra, the second-most-important site in Europe for Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus ruber*, where this year there were over 12,500 chicks in the crèche; there was also a good-sized breeding colony of Gull-billed Terns *Gelochelidon nilotica*. AMA is negotiating with a view to buying or coming to a protection agreement with the owners of eight other lagoons in Málaga province. Capital spending on Fuente de Piedra alone is estimated at £250,000 for 1988-89, and includes the construction of a combined research and public information centre and a series of four public observation hides, the main one of which (to open late 1989) will directly overlook the colony. A

good example of an agreement with a site owner is that made with the proprietors of the salinas at Cabo de Gata, Almeria, another important wetland site, where commercial interests can co-operate with conservation interests. At Fuente de Piedra in 1988, there were actually more Greater Flamingo chicks than in the Camargue (compared with around 40 nests in Doñana), while reconstruction of one of the Gull-billed Tern breeding areas has resulted not only in increased numbers of this species, but also in colonisation by a small number of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*. Unfortunately, a pair of Slender-billed Gulls *L. genei* seen in April did not stay to breed.

**Pagham Harbour** Few birdwatching sites in the South of England are better known than Pagham Harbour in Sussex, and the most popular spot there is the Ferry Pool, which is overlooked from the main Chichester to Selsey road. The 115-ha field surrounding the pool, as well as the pool itself, has now been bought by the Sussex Wildlife Trust, and its future is secured. The many thousands who have enjoyed visiting Pagham may now like to contribute to the appeal for the balance of the purchase price, or obtain details of two signed artists prints of the Pool and of the Harbour, which have been specially painted by John Davis; write to the Sussex Ornithological Society, Holly Cottage, Millers Lane, Outwood, Surrey RH1 5PZ. (Contributed by G. des Forges)

**'BB'-Sunbird tour to Canada** Despite sub-zero temperatures at Churchill, the BB-Sunbird tour to Canada from 27th May to 9th June went very well (plate 262). A total

of 230 species was seen, including a displaying Spruce Grouse *Dendragapus canadensis*, Asian Yellow Rails *Coturnicops noveboracensis* at the group's feet, the spectacular aerial chases of Breeding Hudsonian Godwits *Limosa haemastica*, a Pileated Woodpecker *Dryocopus pileatus* at the picnic table and a Sprague's Pipit *Anthus spragueii* on the ground (a species normally seen only in flight); not to mention the thousands of Lapland *Calcar-ius lapponicus* and Snow Buntings *Plectrophenax nivalis* bottle-necked at Churchill.

**Dorothy Rook** It was with great sadness that we learned of the death in July of Dorothy Rook. For more than a decade until her retirement in 1978, Dorothy was Librarian at the RSPB, doing a great deal to establish the library there and to make it one of the best in the country. At the same time, she earned a considerable reputation for her wise, skilful and ever-patient handling of the thousands of enquiries which came her way. As well as her wide-ranging knowledge, she had a great sense of fun. She was an 'original' in every sense, and all who knew her will remember her with affection.

**'Go Birding'** This is the title of a new series of six television programmes, to be shown on BBC 2 in the late autumn/winter. It is introduced by Tony Soper, who sets out to explore the achievements of practical birdwatching. Starting with rare birds on the Isles of Scilly, the series progresses through range changes, counting and censusing birds, movements and migration, food and feeding, nests (in particular, the value of nest boxes to birds and nest studies), to end with bird and

**262.** 'BB'/SUNBIRD tour to Canada: left to right, Bill Rydell, Mary Rydell, Stu Tingley (co-leader), Jim Lasley, George Rowe, David Fisher (co-leader), John Hurrell, Ted Brett and Verna Timm (David Fisher)



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(D406)

habitat conservation. The work of the BTO gets a conspicuous airing; many of its long-running surveys are shown in action, with RSPB interests emerging in the final two programmes. Sequences to look out for include the successful breeding of Black-winged Stilts in Britain last year, Red Kites at Tregaron tip, Gannets on Grassholm, Pink-footed Geese at Martin Mere, and Barnacle Geese on Islay. There is also a book with the same title, written mostly by the BTO and RSPB staff who helped with the series.

**John Gooders joins FFPS** In June 1988, John Gooders was appointed as the first Executive Director of the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society. The FFPS, the oldest conservation body in the world, is best known for its successes in saving the Arabian oryx and the mountain gorilla, but has maintained a high profile with its work with bats ('Bats Need Friends'), toad tunnels, hedgehogs ('Don't Squash Me'), and so on. John will, of course, maintain his links with the bird-tour company *Birding*, and will continue to initiate new tours and lead a few departures each year.

**Binoculars take a walk** We have received a most unusual press release from Kay Optical, which offers a £100 reward for the recovery of a pair of ZEISS West Germany 7 × 42 B/GAT Dialyt binoculars (serial no: 210906), stolen from their premises at 89B London Road, Morden, Surrey (tel: 01 648 8822). Interest in each other's binoculars is normally healthy and often a little competitive, but this adds a new perspective.

**Don, Dippers, two cats and a farmer** We should like to share with our readers two tales told by BB's Photographic Consultant, Don Smith, which we have discovered in the pages of *The Scots Magazine* (113: 582-584, September 1980):

'For some odd reason most of the funnier things which happen to me are concerned with remote-control photography. For instance, the story of the cat and the dipper.

'On a balmy summer evening I lay half-concealed beneath a fallen tree, hopefully invisible in camouflage clothing, and concentrated on the little waterfall below. A dipper nested there and in a pool near the nest stood a tripod carrying my camera ready to be fired by me from my place of concealment. Not at all discomfited by the

strange metallic triffid on their doorstep, the dippers went about the business of feeding their brood and I obtained a few photographs. I would have got more, but for the arrival of a large white tomcat.

'The cat wanted those young dippers so badly. He prowled back and forth above the nest magnetised by the squeaking of the baby birds, but he just could not find a way down without risking a ducking. Not being a thin cat he gave up in disgust, jumped the burn and with lordly disdain stalked up the bank towards me. To my amazement he jumped up onto the tree beneath which I was hidden, and to my horror started to wet on my boots. All thoughts of dippers disappeared and springing up, I shouted a mighty oath. Never has a cat moved so fast. He clawed at the air and bolted—straight through the burn!

'You must not assume that I delight in frightening cats, but one day when driving near East Kilbride I chanced on a cat walking home with a vole in its jaws. Now at the time I had a tawny owl in my care and I coveted that mouse, for a spare mouse is always useful in such circumstances. Stopping the car, I took off my shoes and socks and stealthily pink-panthered after pussy. Two yards to go and casting caution to the wind I sprang into action and ran at the cat screeching hysterically. Cat merely turned and looked at me and, with pity in its eyes, mouse still in its mouth, popped through the fence and unhurriedly loped off.

'Judging further pursuit to be pointless I swung on my heel and there, cowering in the hedge, was a poor terrified farmer, a great hulk of a man, bug-eyed, with his jaw resting on his collar stud. What else can you say in the circumstances except "Afternoon, lovely day". For some odd reason he did not reply. The cat must have got his tongue!'

**Arresting misprint** Nigel Cottle has sent us a cutting from the *Somerset Express* of 2nd July 1988, and under the headline 'Birds hold up building work' is a report which includes a list of the birds—'sparrows, blackbirds, thrushes, African basin warblers and chiff-chaffs'—which would be in danger. We can imagine Sedge Warblers nesting in the conservatory, but . . . the mind boggles.

**Conservation conversation** Reported to us recently:

*Dear Little Old Lady (RSPB member, of course):*  
'I have a question to ask.'

Senior RSPB staff member: 'How can I help?'  
 Dear Little Old Lady: 'Is it true that I should shoot Magpies from the side, rather than from behind? I've heard that the shot doesn't penetrate so well if they're shot from behind.'

Senior RSPB staff member. ' . . . ' (stunned silence).

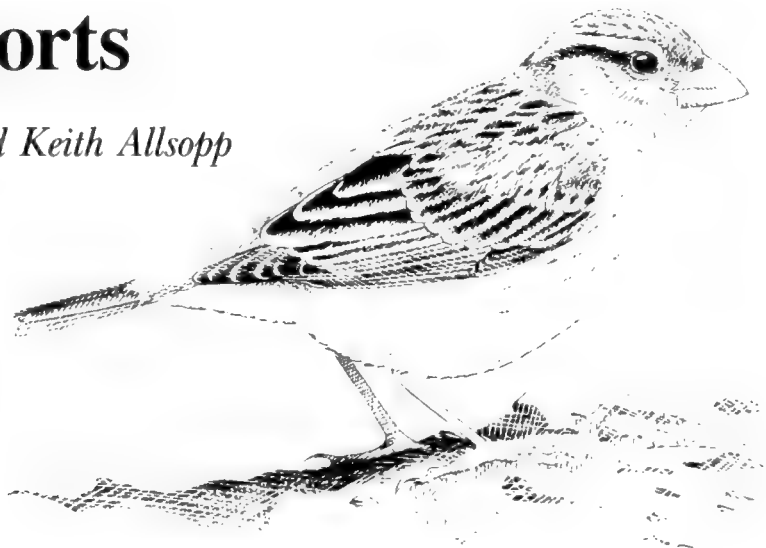
**Changes of Recorders** Keith A. Mason, The Sett, Common Hill, Fownhope, Here-

ford HR1 4QA, has taken over from Allan J. Smith as Recorder for Herefordshire. Mike Madders, Smithy Cottage, Lochdon, Craignure, Mull, Argyll PA64 6AP, has taken over from Dr A. R. Jennings as Recorder for Strathclyde (Aygyl & Bute).

**Change of address of Recorder** S. M. Henson, Recorder for Nottinghamshire, has now moved to 65 Covert Crescent, Radcliffe on Trent, Nottingham NG12 2HN.

## June reports

*Ian Dawson and Keith Allsopp*



These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records.  
 Unless otherwise stated, dates refer to June 1988

*After three days of Atlantic westerlies, the Azores anticyclone extended north on 4th to the west of Britain and Ireland, turning the winds to the north, with consequent lower air temperatures. This high pressure remained to the west and north until 28th, with east to northeast winds frequent over southern England. Westerly weather returned on 29th and 30th.*

### North Ronaldsay comes of age

Only recently 'discovered' as a migration hot spot, and with a new observatory, North Ronaldsay, the northernmost island of the Orkney group, has this spring shaken off the shadow of Fair Isle (Shetland), with a superb set of birds. Following a female **Spanish Sparrow** *Passer hispaniolensis* in late May, a strange, pink-rumped finch, first seen on the evening of 2nd, was soon identified as Britain and Ireland's first **Pallas's Rosefinch** *Carpodacus roseus* (plate 265), occasioning the first mass twitch to Orkney, where the **Needle-tailed Swift** *Hirundapus caudacutus* (plates 263 & 264) on Hoy was also on offer until 7th. On 1st, North Ronaldsay also



263 & 264. Needle-tailed Swift *Hirundapus caudacutus*, Orkney, June 1988 (Nick Wall)

held a **Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica*, three **Icterine Warblers** *Hippolais icterina* and seven **Red-backed Shrikes** *Lanius collurio*. Not to be outdone, however, Fair Isle, between 1st and 4th, held daily maxima of three **Bluethroats**, two **Icterine Warblers**, five **Marsh Warblers** *Acrocephalus palustris*, three **Great Reed Warblers** *A. arundinaceus*, a **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus*, six **Red-backed Shrikes** and two **Woodchat Shrikes** *L. senator*, with a third from 7th, as well as two **Rosefinches**—Scarlet that is—*C. erythrinus*. Meanwhile, back on North Ronaldsay, the Pallas's Rosefinch was destined to stay until mid July.



265. Pallas's Rosefinch *Carpodacus roseus*, Orkney, June 1988 (John Hewitt)

#### Divers to ducks

A magnificent summer-plumaged **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* remained in Achnahaird Bay (Highland) to 4th. Four adult **Red-necked Grebes** *Podiceps grisegena*, also in breeding dress and presumed to be

failed breeders, had returned to Gosford (Lothian) by 25th.

A large shearwater, probably **Cory's** *Calonectris diomedea*, was noted on the crossing to Fair Isle on 11th, and from that island on 23rd. One of the month's big surprises,

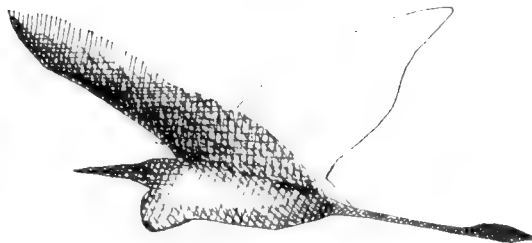


however, was an all-dark, male-type **Frigate-bird** *Fregata*, seen flying south past Fairview (Co. Dublin) on 24th, before turning and continuing inland over Dublin City.

An elusive **Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus* skulked at Kenfig (Mid Glamorgan) towards the end of the month, and Bedfordshire's second-ever **Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* performed well on the evening of 20th at Girtford, near Sandy. A small buffy heron at Chew Valley Lake (Avon) on 10th was probably a **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis*. The day before, there had been a **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* at Mainsholme (Strathclyde), while another commuted between Langton Herring and Weymouth (Dorset) mid month. Its big cousin, the **Great White Egret** *E. alba*, was seen at three Leicestershire reservoirs, on 14th, 16th and 18th. The only **Purple Herons** *Ardea purpurea* reported were on St Mary's (Scilly) and in Suffolk, while all reports of **Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* came from East Anglia and Kent (plate 266).

A **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* was seen at Porthgwarra and Sennen (Cornwall) on 14th, and four days later a **White Stork** *C. ciconia* was noted flying over Hemel Hempstead (Hertfordshire).

Three **Pink-footed Geese** *Anser brachyrhynchus* appeared with many small migrants on Fair Isle on 1st. A drake **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* was at Tacumshin (Co. Wexford) on 12th, and was replaced on 14th by a **Teal** *A. crecca* of the Nearctic race *carolinensis*. Unseasonal **Long-tailed Ducks** *Clangula hyemalis* were in Northamptonshire and on



HIGGOTT

the Yeo Estuary (Avon). There were two drake **King Eiders** *Somateria spectabilis* in northeast Scotland (plates 267 & 268), and a drake **Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* off Holme (Norfolk) from 19th to 24th. A movement of **Common Scoters** *M. nigra* was evident on 26th, with 183 passing south in two hours off Barns Ness (Lothian), 130 north past Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire), eight drakes on Chew Valley Lake and another on Swithland Reservoir (Leicestershire).

#### Raptors to waders

A **Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* on Fair Isle from 1st was found dead on 9th, soaked in fulmar oil; another had passed through Spurn (Humberside) and Gibraltar Point on 2nd. Gibraltar Point also had an **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* on 1st and 2nd, and there were some half dozen others reported from English localities. There were two **Red Kites** *Milvus milvus* in southeast England mid month, and a **Black Kite** *M. migrans* near Oundle (Northamptonshire) on 20th. The last **Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* to pass

266. Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia*, Kent, June 1988 (Reg Mellis)





267 & 268. King Eider *Somateria spectabilis*, Grampian, May 1988 (S. M. D. Alexander)



through Filey Brigg in a record spring there was on 1st. A long-staying **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* frequented the Hickling (Norfolk) area until 19th, while the other four sightings of this species were equally divided between Kent and Cambridgeshire.

Five **Cranes** *Grus grus* on the east side of Britain reached as far north as Orkney. Two **Black-winged Stilts** *Himantopus himantopus* called in at two sites in Suffolk on 5th and 6th, before perhaps moving to Willen Lake (Buckinghamshire), where two took up residence from 7th to 18th. An **Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta* at Chew Valley Lake from 16th to 20th was only the fifth for that well-watched site. **Black-winged Pratincoles** *Glareola nordmanni* were found on the Dee Estuary (Merseyside) on 2nd and at Clevedon (Avon) from 10th to 15th, allowing many birders the chance to catch up with this species, and a further pratincole was noted over Wells woods (Norfolk) on 26th. The return wader passage was already well in evidence by the second half of the month, with 217 **Lapwings** *Vanellus vanellus* heading south through Spurn on 12th.

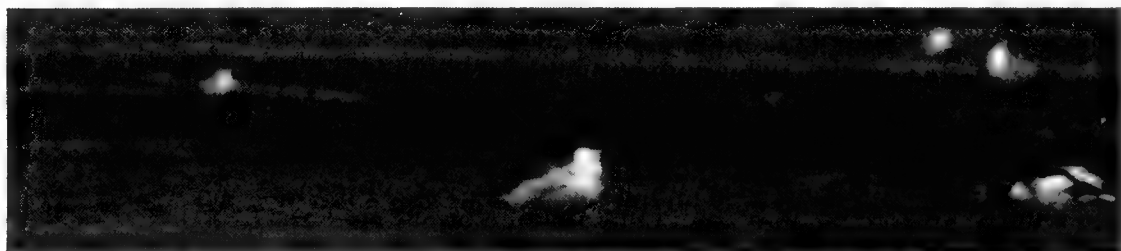
Unusual small waders were very thin on the ground, with only a **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* on the Ythan Estuary (Grampian) until 3rd, a **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* briefly at Holkham (Norfolk) on 18th, and **Wilson's Phalaropes** *Phalaropus tricolor* at Tacumshin on 11th (a male), and at Swords Estuary (Co. Dublin) on 12th and 13th, and in Poole Harbour (Dorset) on 29th (females). There were also four widely scattered **Red-necked Phalaropes** *P. lobatus*.

### Skuas to Roller

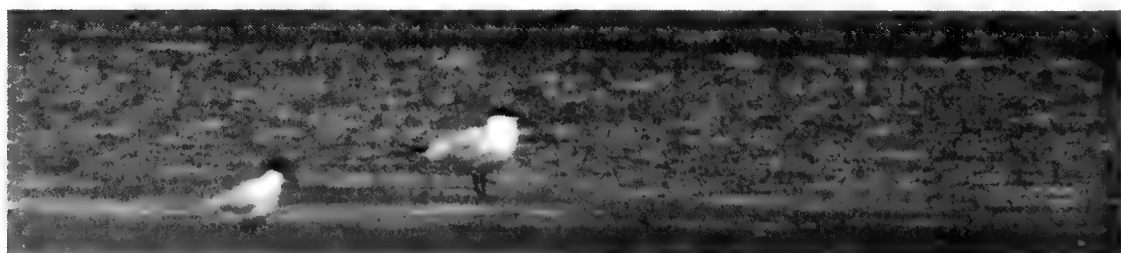
During its purple patch, North Ronaldsay saw a visiting **Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus* on 1st, and there were two together on Fair Isle on 19th. The best gulls were a **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* at Severn Beach (Avon) on 12th and an adult **Sabine's Gull** *L. sabini* flew north past Southwold (Suffolk) on the same day. The resident Seaforth (Merseyside) **Ring-billed Gull** *L. delawarensis* remained, and a first-year **Iceland Gull** *L. glaucoides* was a good summer find at Northam Burrows (Devon) on 27th and 28th.

Eight reports of **Caspian Terns** *Sterna caspia* as far northwest as Newman's Flash (Cheshire) probably included some duplication of wandering birds, while the **Lesser Crested Tern** *S. bengalensis* remained on the Farne Islands (Northumberland). The threatened **Roseate Tern** *S. dougallii* declined to only 31 pairs in Northern Ireland from a high of several hundred only a few years ago, and one at Minsmere (Suffolk) from 26th to 30th was noteworthy. A **Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus* at Stanpit (Dorset) on 16th coincided with one of the **Caspian Terns** (plates 269 & 270) there, and, also on 16th, there was a **White-winged Black Tern** *C. leucopterus* on Loch of Tankerness (Orkney). A misplaced long-staying **Black Tern** *C. niger* on the island of Barra (Western Isles) was unusual, as was an unseasonal **Little Auk** *Alle alle* at Spurn on 15th.

A **Scops Owl** *Otus scops* was reported in Shetland towards the end of the month, and an **Alpine Swift** *Apus melba* was seen off Bampton (Humberside) on 1st and 2nd. A



269 & 270. Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* with Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* (above) and Sandwich Tern *S. sandvicensis* (below), Dorset, June 1988 (P. R. Boardman)





total of six **Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster* was seen between 10th and 23rd in Scilly and the east coast of England, and a **Roller** *Coracias garrulus* appeared briefly on St Mary's on 11th.

### Passerines

A **Shore Lark** *Eremophila alpestris* on Portland Bill (Dorset) mid month can be added to this month's other unseasonal sightings. Two reports of **Red-rumped Swallows** *Hirundo daurica* included the first in Bedfordshire, at Blows Downs on 22nd, while a potential second new bird for Britain and Ireland this month was a single, fortunate observer's **Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* at Stithians Reservoir (Cornwall) on 22nd.

A male grey-headed **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* of the race *thunbergi* was on Fair Isle on 6th, and a male of the black-headed race *feldegg* held territory in a cereal field in Oxfordshire from 12th. Away from the Northern Isles, there were **Icterine Warblers** on 8th on Blakeney Point (Norfolk) and Lundy (Devon); and a singing **Great Reed Warbler** was at Cley (Norfolk) from 8th to 23rd, with another singing in a Montgomeryshire garden mid month. **Paddyfield Warblers** *Acrocephalus agricola* were trapped

on the Isle of May (Fife) on 5th, and at Landguard (Suffolk) on 11th, where a **Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* was subsequently responsible for mass hallucination. Two further **Subalpine Warblers** *Sylvia cantillans* appeared in this record spring: on Hengistbury Head (Dorset) from 3rd to 4th, and on Bardsey (Gwynedd) on 20th. The previous week, on 13th, both Bardsey and Portland had recorded **Greenish Warblers** *P. trochiloides*, whilst a 'pair' of **Sardinian Warblers** were on opposite sides of England, the female on Lundy on 8th, and the male at Sandwich on 22nd.

Wandering **Golden Orioles** *Oriolus oriolus* were scattered from Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) north to Fair Isle, whilst away from Fair Isle there were **Woodchat Shrikes** on Skye (Highland) and at Porthtowan (Cornwall) on 14th, and **Scarlet Rosefinches** appeared south of the border in Humberside, Kent and Somerset, as well as three together on Bardsey on 13th. There was some immigration of **Crossbills** *Loxia curvirostris* and **Siskins** *Carduelis spinus* in both Lothian and Lincolnshire, where Gibraltar Point had its first June Siskin for 15 years. Male **Black-headed Buntings** *Emberiza melanocephala* strayed to Irvine (Strathclyde) on 4th and 5th, and Fair Isle on 9th.

## Notes



**Identification of adult Sooty and Bridled Terns** During a trip to St Lucia in the Caribbean in June 1986, I was able to watch both adult Sooty *Sterna fuscata* and adult Bridled Terns *S. anaethetus* and to study their identification.

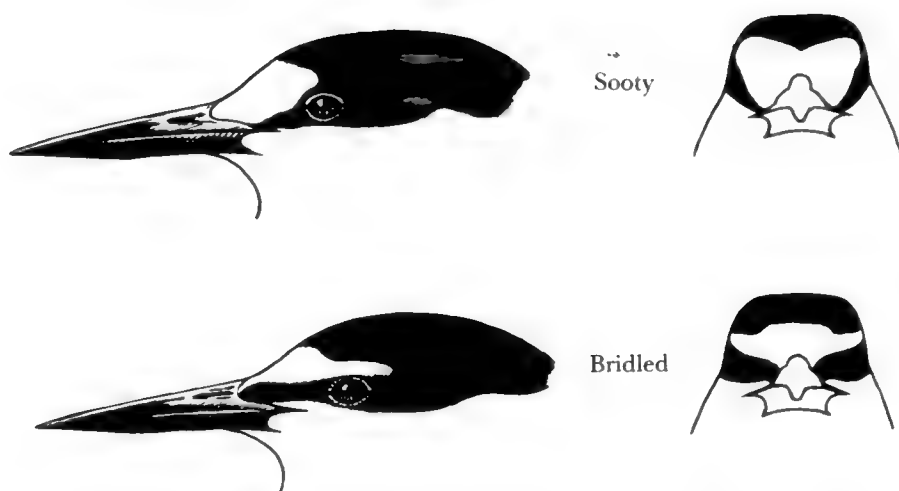


Fig. 1. Head patterns of adult Sooty *Sterna fuscata* (upper) and Bridled Terns *S. anaethetus*. Note position at which bridle meets bill

Although Bridled may overlap in size with Common Tern *S. hirundo*, it certainly appears larger than that species in the field. It is described as somewhat smaller than Sooty, but in mixed flocks size difference is difficult to perceive. Bridled has a slighter build, slimmer wings and a more elegant and buoyant flight, in contrast to Sooty's more robust, heavy character; as both have the same tail measurements, the tail of Bridled is proportionately longer than that of Sooty.

The extent of white from the forehead to above or beyond the eye, and the presence or otherwise of a neck collar are commonly given as fieldmarks. The exact position of the eye, however, is often difficult to see; I would suggest that emphasis should be on the extent of white on the forehead and loreal regions and on the exact position of the black 'bridle'. On Bridled, the white is confined to a thin bar across the forehead extending over and beyond the eye, and the bridle runs across the full length of the maxillary feathering. On Sooty, the white forehead extends farther up towards the crown, but does not reach around beyond the eye; the bridle starts at the eye, but cuts down across the lores to join the bill around the gape. Thus, the area of white above the bridle is much deeper but less elongated on Sooty than on Bridled.

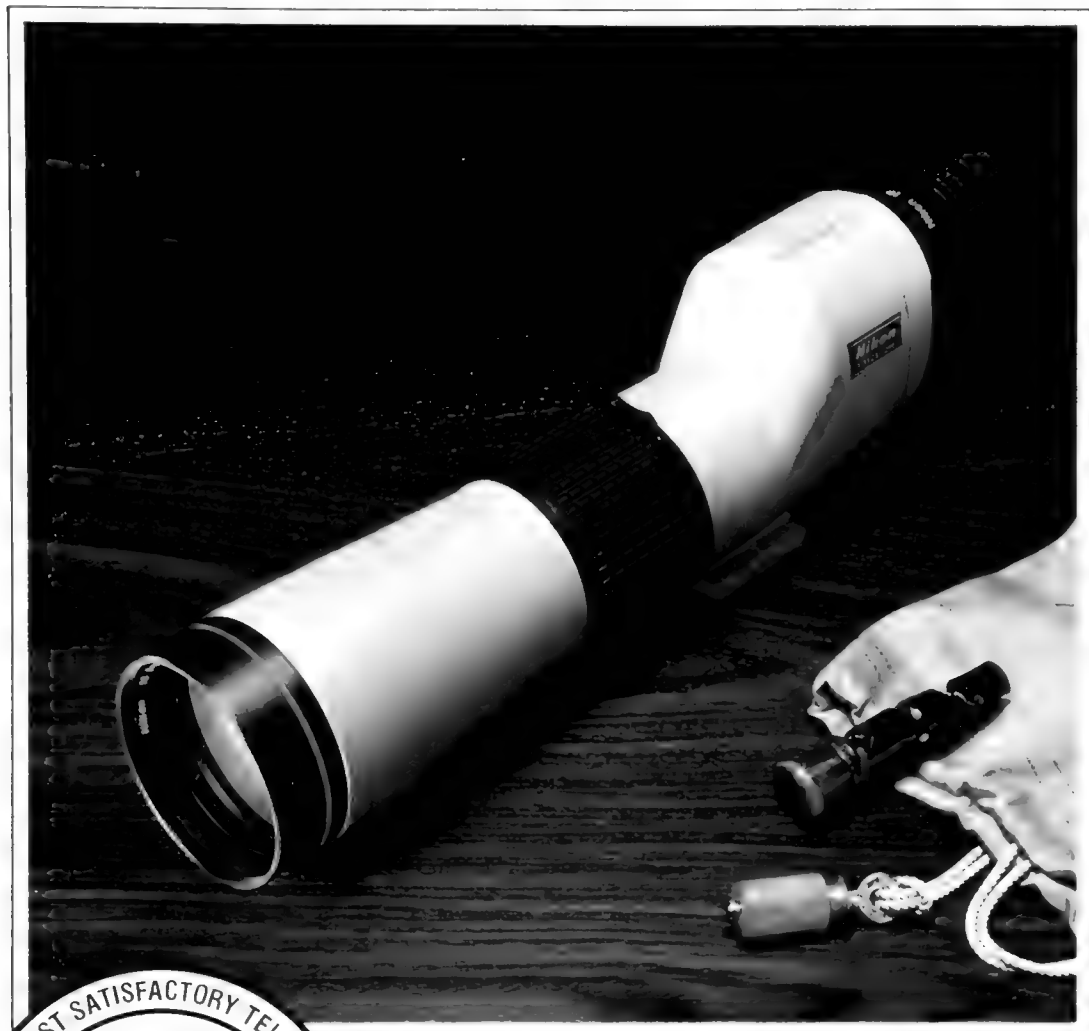
The Bridled Tern's black cap stops abruptly at the lower nape; at this point the upper mantle is mid-grey (not white) and almost immediately merges into the dark slate of the mantle proper. The white of the rear ear-coverts runs up behind the cap, but the two sides do not quite meet; there is, therefore, only the suggestion of a pale collar, and this rather indistinct even at close range. In strong sunlight, the crown can appear grey and the collar is lost altogether. In some conditions, the pinch of white at the hindneck on flying Bridled can be useful, making a sharp white triangle on the side of the head, whereas on Sooty the black of the







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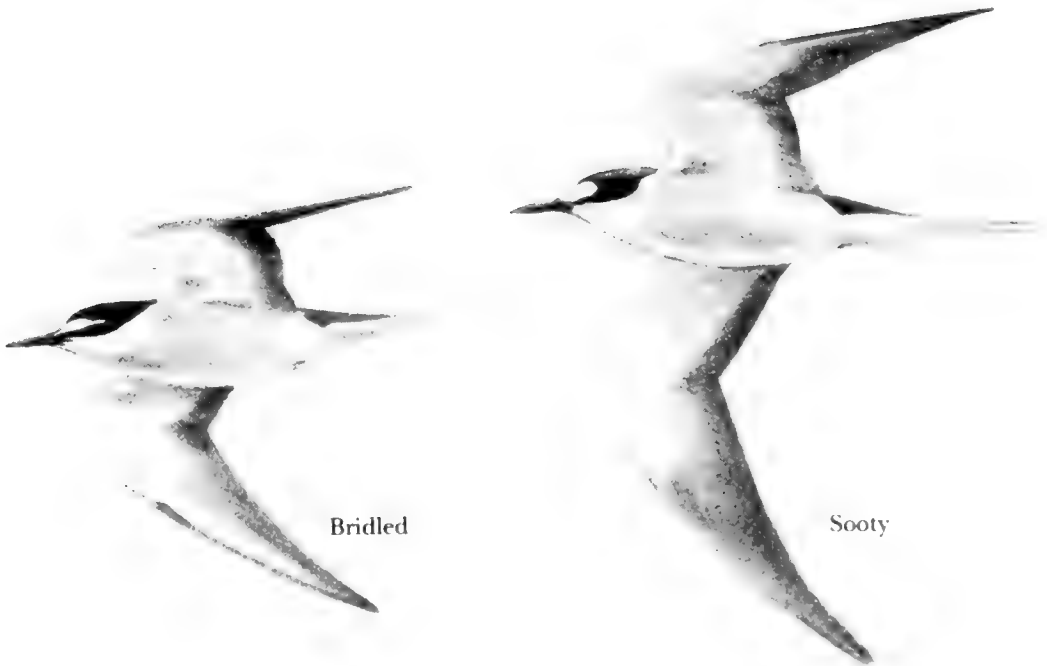


Fig. 2. Adult Bridled *Sterna anaethetus* (left) and Sooty Terns *S. fuscata* in flight. Note slighter appearance of Bridled, with proportionately longer tail, also head and ear-covert pattern and primary pattern

crown runs down the nape and joins the black mantle in a thin black strip. (Some field guides show a black half-collar on Sooty Tern: this is incorrect.)

In flight, Sooty Tern appears black above and contrastingly white below. Its upperparts are black from crown to tail, without change in tone, and the tail has white only on the outermost feather. The inner wing shows a white leading edge identical to that of Bridled. Bridled Tern shows a typical tern cap and the diffuse grey collar quickly gives way to a dark slate-grey mantle, back and wings, the latter darkening towards the tips. On Bridled of the race *melanoptera* (Caribbean, West Africa), the back gets progressively lighter towards the tail, the outer three feathers of which have white outer webs (thus showing more white than Sooty, on which only the outermost tail feather shows white); Bridled Terns from the Red Sea and Persian Gulf (race *fuligula*), however, show a similar tail pattern to Sooty, and more uniform dark upperparts. It is important to note that in bright conditions Sooty Terns can look very pale above, thus resembling Bridled. At such times, I noted Sooty as showing a tawny tinge, whereas Bridled (of race *melanoptera* at least) still remained slaty, in contradiction to most of the literature.

From below and at a distance, adult Sooty and Bridled Terns are difficult to separate. In dull conditions, the extent of white on the under

primaries is a most useful feature, as noted by Stefan Lithner (*Brit. Birds* 76: 348-349). Basically, both species have primaries and secondaries a light grey, darkening noticeably towards the extremities. The rest of the underwing—the coverts—is white. Bridled has white inner webs to the outermost three primaries, producing a white ‘finger’ down the middle of the outer wing, fading towards the tip. This is a good feature at moderate distances in dull conditions, and excellent on individuals overhead; but any strong sunlight ‘burns out’ the greyness of Sooty Tern, particularly when banking away, so care is needed. ALAN HARRIS  
117 Spring Hills, Harlow, Essex CM20 1TA

**Behaviour of Swifts at House Martin colony** A previous note (*Brit. Birds* 79: 339) on a Pallid Swift *Apus pallida* occupying the nest of a House Martin *Delichon urbica* recalled the following observations. A House Martin colony at Slinfold, West Sussex, comprising between two and four natural nests and seven nestboxes, has been watched since 1968; Swifts *A. apus* made annual visits to the colony from 1974 until 1977.

Visits started soon after the Swifts had returned to the area, and continued throughout the breeding season. These normally involved several high-speed flights with two to four Swifts flying past very close to the House Martin nests, with one sometimes banging a nest with its wing. The number of visits varied between both days and times of the day, although most were in the morning or late evening. For example, on 6th July 1976, two Swifts made 22 visits between 06.30 and 13.00 GMT, and eight more visits between 19.05 and 21.40 GMT.

Occasionally, a swift left the party to circle slowly nearby, prior to hovering in front of a nest. More rarely, one landed on a nest, staying briefly (5-15 seconds), though on no occasion did one actually enter a martins' nest. Visits by smaller parties usually took place in silence. In contrast, towards the end of July, parties of 12-15 Swifts made very noisy evening visits.

Adult House Martins reacted as follows: early in the season, they left their nests in alarm, but, while incubating, they hissed vigorously at lone Swifts hovering or landing on a nest, leaving only when the threat had subsided. Well-grown young martins crowded the nest entrances hoping to be fed, but martins of all ages were intimidated by the larger, screaming Swift parties, and crouched low in the nest. Once, a Swift tried unsuccessfully to pull an adult House Martin from a nest by its forewing, but nestlings were never attacked.

*The Handbook* recorded Swifts nesting in old House Martin nests, and Walpole-Bond (1938, *History of Sussex Birds*) mentioned Swifts roosting in such sites, but there is no mention of either activity in *BWP* vol. 4.

S. W. M. HUGHES

6 West Way, Slinfold, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 7SB

**Isabelline Wheatear using ‘canopy technique’ when feeding** On 31st October 1986, while I was watching individuals of six species of wheatear *Oenanthe* on one small dry-soil field at Elot, near Eilat, Israel, the feeding

behaviour of one Isabelline Wheatear *O. isabellina* attracted particular attention. It stood on slightly raised mounds, stones or lumps of dry earth, apparently looking for food, then rapidly hopped or flew 3-6 m. It then either picked up a food item instantly or, more often, opened its wings wide, to the side and forwards in front of its head (in a fashion recalling film that I have seen of Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca* producing a shade-canopy with its wings when feeding in water); the leading edges of the wings did not touch in front of the head, but left a small gap, the effect nevertheless being to shade the area where the wheatear then apparently always found a food item. The wheatear then flew a short distance to another lookout perch before repeating the process. I interpreted this behaviour as a method by which the wheatear provoked its potential prey—spotted from a distance, but currently hidden—into tell-tale movement. This very distinctive feeding technique was employed by this Isabelline Wheatear five times during one 20-minute spell when I watched it closely. I do not recall ever before having seen a passerine behaving in this way.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

*Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ*

**Probable hybrid Willow × Greenish Warbler** On 8th June 1986, whilst birdwatching in a wood composed mainly of silver birch *Betula pendula* in Highland Region, I located a singing warbler which immediately struck me as something unfamiliar. My initial identification was a Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, as I had heard one a few years ago in a Highland glen and the song was similar. I called to R. Shand and S. Rivers, and we observed the bird for about an hour. The song varied from a Willow Warbler *P. trochilus* downscale cascade ending in 'scratchy' notes to a phrase of pure 'scratchy' gabble, the latter resembling the previously heard Greenish Warbler. The bird sang continuously throughout the time we watched it, and the following description was taken:

**UPPERPARTS** Head, mantle and rump olive-brown with faint yellow tinge; indistinct pale yellowish supercilium extending to ear-coverts; darkish eyestripe. Wing-coverts olive-brown, no trace of a wing-bar; primaries and rectrices brown.

**UNDERPARTS** Chin, throat and belly off-white with yellow tinge; greyish upper breast. Undertail-coverts not seen.

**BARE PARTS** Bill brownish with pale orange base to lower mandible; eye dark; legs pinkish-brown; soles of feet yellow ochre.

We contacted Roy H. Dennis and returned to the area about an hour later. The bird was located immediately and after a short while R. H. Dennis concluded that the bird had the plumage and jizz characteristics of a hybrid between Willow and Greenish Warbler. He commented that the song was variable, sometimes having a stronger Willow Warbler character and at other times being more like Greenish Warbler.

DOUGLAS E. DICKSON

*133 Duddingston Drive, Kirkcaldy, Fife KY26XG*

**Carrion Crow picking up dead fish with its feet** The taking of fish by opportunistic Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* has been reported by several observers, and in some detail by P. J. Dunn (*Brit. Birds* 78: 151-152), but all the observations appear to concern crows capturing fish with the

bill, as is to be expected (Dr C. J. F. Coombs *in litt.*). On 23rd June 1984, at Rostherne Mere NNR, Cheshire, Malcolm Greenhalgh and I watched a Carrion Crow take a dead fish, which we identified through binoculars as a roach *Rutilus rutilus*, from the calm surface of the mere. The crow gripped the fish with its feet, and carried it in the manner of an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*.

MALCOLM CALVERT

12 Hill Drive, Handforth, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 3AR

## Letters

**Field identification of Radde's and Dusky Warblers** S. C. Madge and Richard Grimmett (*Brit. Birds* 80: 595-603) provided a useful review of the characters of Radde's *Phylloscopus schwarzi* and Dusky Warblers *P. fuscatus*. As the authors showed, the differences between these two species, especially the structural differences, are such that, given reasonably good views and, preferably, previous experience of one or the other, there is little difficulty in their separation. I was surprised, however, that one rather obvious and useful plumage difference was overlooked. The undertail-coverts of Radde's Warbler are a bright, deep tawny-buff and show a sharp demarcation from the whitish to yellowish belly and pale fulvous flanks. This feature is apparently visible in plate 312. On Dusky Warbler, the undertail-coverts are a much duller buff or fulvous and do not contrast markedly with the flanks. I probably see well over one hundred different individuals of each species in Thailand every winter and have found this difference to be constant.

The authors rightly stressed the similarity between Radde's Warbler and Yellow-streaked Warbler *P. armandii*. The latter species resembles Radde's even further, in likewise possessing bright tawny-buff undertail-coverts.

The call-note differences are accurately described. By far the most frequent note given by wintering Radde's Warblers is the 'nervous "prit-prit"'. The soft 'chek chek' (to my ear, a single, quiet 'tuc', repeated at intervals) is given much less frequently.

PHILIP D. ROUND

Center for Wildlife Research, Biology Department, Faculty of Science,  
Mahidol University, Rama 6 Road, Bangkok 10400, Thailand

**Report of adult Cox's Sandpiper in Hong Kong** The interesting article by Dr P. A. Buckley on the World's first known juvenile Cox's Sandpiper *Calidris paramelanotos* in Massachusetts (*Brit. Birds* 81: 253-257) referred to 'an adult reported from Hong Kong in spring 1987: *Brit. Birds* 80: 391.'

The bird concerned was seen by myself and three other observers who had good but brief views of an unfamiliar *Calidris* which exhibited some of the then-known characteristics of Cox's Sandpiper. The record was never claimed as such or formally submitted to the rarities committee of the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society or any other authority; a copy of the

field description was, however, lodged with the Recorder of the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, for reference purposes only.

The 'News and comment' item (*Brit. Birds* 80: 391) quoted a second-hand report that visiting birders had 'apparently dipped out on what was probably Asia's first Cox's Sandpiper', a statement which was not intended as anything other than an interesting snippet of gossip.

This letter aims to prevent the perpetuation of this misunderstanding of the Hong Kong observation as a firm claim of Cox's Sandpiper; that identification remains an intriguing possibility, but the record is neither claimed nor accepted.

PETER KENNERLEY

*Flat 2C, Crane Court, 45 Sassoon Road, Pok Fu Lam, Hong Kong*

## Announcements

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**'Not BB III'** The third number of this tasteless and scurrilous publication tries to emulate its great parent journal, but fails pitifully, as did the two earlier issues. It is included in *British BirdShop* (pages xix & xx) to make it look as if we can take a joke (there is only one in *Not BB III*) against ourselves.

**New books in British BirdShop** The following books have been added to the British BirdShop list this month:

Askew *The Dragonflies of Europe*

Cady & Hume *The Complete Book of British Birds*

Delin & Svensson *Photographic Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*

Duff, Hatton & Stirrup *Not BB III*

Harrison & Reid-Henry *A History of the Birds of Britain*

Mearns, Mearns & Rees *Biographies for Birdwatchers*

These can be obtained POST FREE through British BirdShop. Please use the order forms on pages xix and xx.

**'BB'-Sunbird trip to Canary Islands** Provisionally planned for 16th-23rd August 1989 and to be led by David Fisher (Sunbird) and Killian Mullarney (*BB*), this exploratory trip will concentrate on the area's endemic landbirds and the exciting possibilities among the seabirds of the southern North Atlantic. *BB* subscribers can claim a 10% reduction on the full price. Write now for details to David Fisher, Sunbird, PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF.

**'BB'-Sunbird tour around New Zealand** Timed to precede the International Ornithological Congress (see *Brit. Birds* 80: 289; 81: 534), this special one-off two-week tour during 17th November to 1st December 1990 will attempt to cover the choicest birding areas on both North and South Islands. Whilst New Zealand is well-known for its endangered landbirds, it is less often appreciated that it also provides spectacular opportunities for observing a wide variety of southern seabirds and waders. The leaders will be David Fisher (Sunbird) and Tim Sharrock (*BB*). Precise details are not yet available, but anyone who may wish to join this group should write now, to register their interest, to David Fisher, Sunbird, PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF.





**XX IOC** The 20th International Ornithological Congress will take place in Christchurch, New Zealand, during 2nd-9th December 1990. The Congress programme will include six plenary lectures, 48 symposia, contributed papers (spoken and poster), workshops, discussion groups and films. There will be a mid-Congress excursion day. Longer excursions are planned to interesting ornithological sites in New Zealand before and after the Congress. In late 1990, New Zealand will also host the 20th World Conference of the International Council for Bird Preservation in Hamilton during 21st-27th November 1990, and a Pacific Festival of Nature Films in Dunedin during 27th November to 1st December 1990. Photographic and stamp exhibitions will be held in Christchurch in association with the IOC. Requests for the First Circular, which includes information on the above events, should be sent to: Dr Ben D. Bell, Secretary-General, 20th International Ornithological Congress, Department of Zoology, Victoria University of Wellington, Private Bag, Wellington, New Zealand [Telex NZ30882 VUWLIB; Facsimile NZ (04) 712070].

## Recent reports

*Compiled by Mark Boyd*

This summary covers the period 15th August to 18th September 1988

**Black-browed Albatross** *Diomedea melanophris* Budleigh Salterton (Devon), 23rd August.

**Manx Shearwater** *Puffinus puffinus* Many storm-blown individuals inland in England and Wales, particularly on 4th and 11th September.

**White-faced Petrel** *Pelagodroma marina* Turnberry Point (Strathclyde), two, 4th September.

**Leach's Petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* Storm-blown individuals across much of Britain from around 4th September.

**Matsudaira's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma matsudairae* CORRECTION The storm-petrel at sea off Cornwall on 3rd August, originally identified as Tristram's Storm-petrel *O. tristrami* (*Brit. Birds* 81: 482), has now been reidentified as this species.

**Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana* A good autumn: many in southern Britain during mid to late August.

**Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* Stithians Reservoir (Cornwall), from 4th September; Needles (Isle of Wight), 3rd-6th September; Dungeness (Kent), 9th-11th September; Keyhaven (Hampshire), from 9th September.

**Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor*

Draycote Water (Warwickshire), from 13th September.

**Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* Burnham-on-Sea (Somerset), from 3rd September.

**Sabine's Gull** *Larus sabini* Normal records from mainly west coast of Britain, but a few long-staying, storm-blown individuals inland, such as at Chew Valley Lake (Avon), during 1st-13th September.

**Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* Gronant (Clwyd), throughout.

**Common Nighthawk** *Chordeiles minor* Woolston Eyes Nature Reserve (Cheshire), 11th September.

**Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* Holme (Norfolk) and north Norfolk coast, at least 16th August and 4th-5th September.

**Tawny Pipit** *Anthus campestris* Southern Britain, at least eight during 6th-8th September.

**Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellinus* Kenfig (Mid Glamorgan), 8th September.

**Lanceolated Warbler** *Locustella lanceolata* Fair Isle (Shetland), from 16th September.

**Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Northern Isles, at least five, mid August.

**Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephala* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 28th August.

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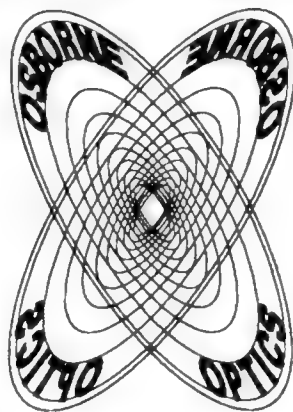
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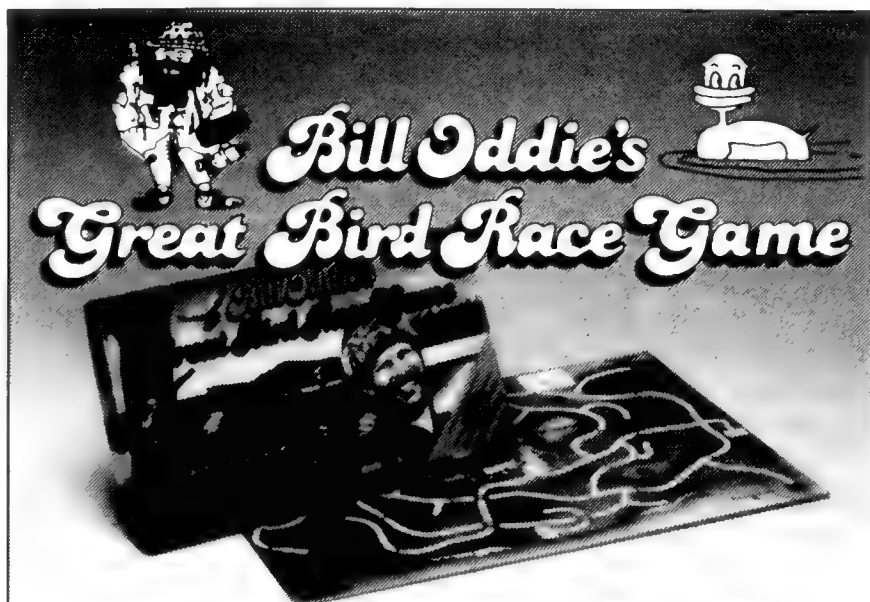
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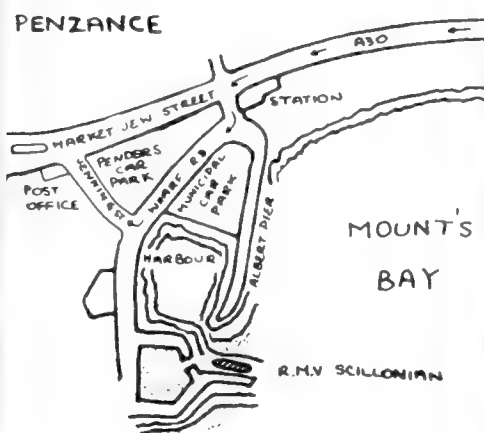


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**Front cover:** Dunlins (*Robert Still*): the original drawing of this month's cover design, measuring 18.6 × 20.7 cm, is for sale in a postal auction (see page 31 in January issue for procedure)

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# British Birds

Volume 81 Number 11 November 1988



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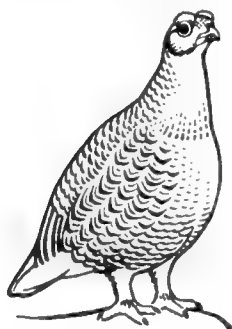
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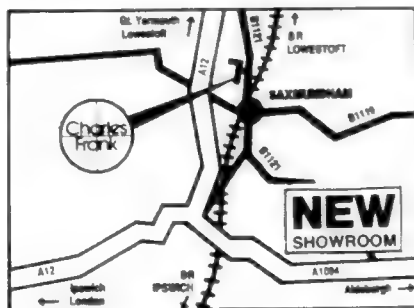
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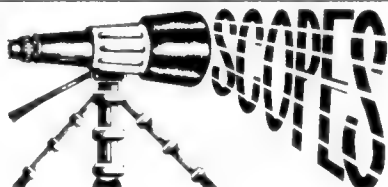
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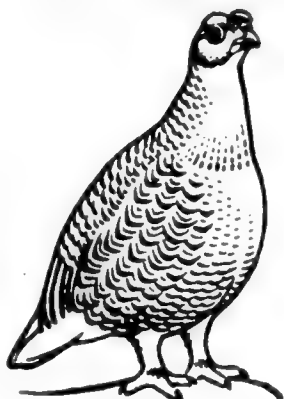
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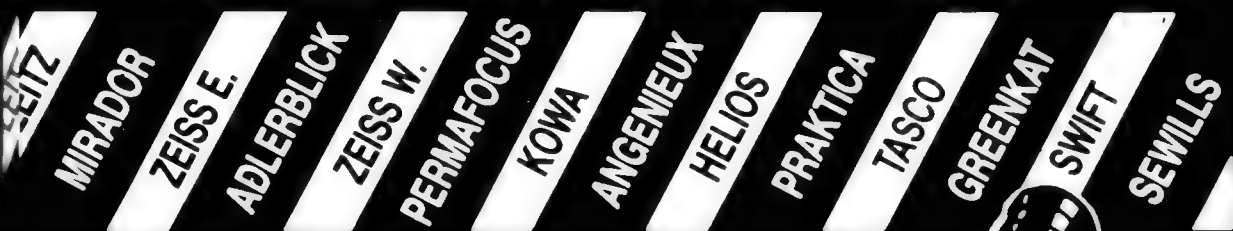
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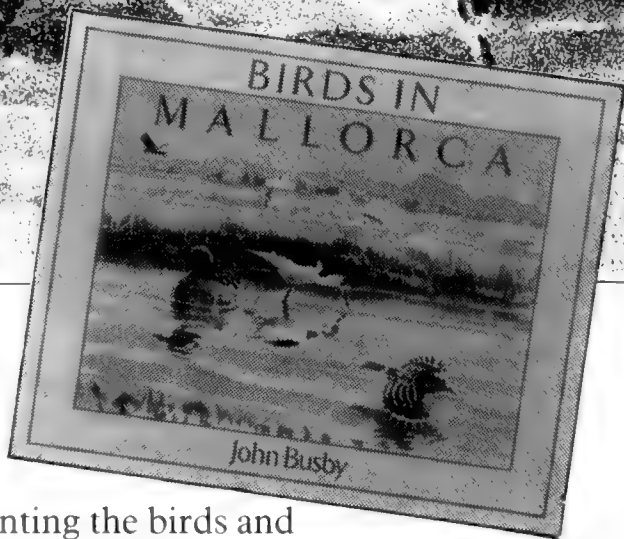
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# British Birds

VOLUME 81 NUMBER 11 NOVEMBER 1988

BRITISH BIRDS

NOV 1988

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1987

Sponsored by

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West Germany

*Michael J. Rogers and the Rarities Committee  
with comments by R. A. Hume*

**T**his is the thirtieth annual report of the Rarities Committee. Once again, the work of the Committee has been supported by the much-appreciated sponsorship of ZEISS *West Germany*. This most welcome financial assistance enables us to deal more effectively with both the processing and the publication of records and to include photographs and drawings of some of the rarities within this report.

Rarities Committee membership is listed on the inside front cover each month, and on the back of the title page in each volume. Points of interest arising mainly from the Committee's annual meeting in May 1988 have been published already in 'Rarities Committee news and announcements' (*Brit. Birds* 81: 464-465). It is most unfortunate that two batches of records (one from Shetland and the other from Wales) were lost in the post during the year. It is hoped that both can be rebuilt in the coming year.

Details of the Committee's constitution and operation have been published in 'Rare birds: the work of the British Birds Rarities Committee' (*Brit. Birds* 80: 487-491) and are contained in a fact sheet, a copy of which may be obtained from the Secretary, Michael J. Rogers, whose address is at the end of this report. Also available from the Secretary is a list of the species considered by the Committee, and copies of the Rarities Committee Record Form, which should be used (or its format followed) when submitting reports. Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope of suitable size when requesting any of these items. All reports of any species on the Committee's list should be sent to the Secretary or, in the case of a trapped and ringed rarity, to the BTO Ringing Office, both preferably via the appropriate county or regional recorder.

### 1987 and earlier years

The Committee has already dealt with 1,007 records for 1987, 86% of which have been accepted. A total of 441 records for 1987 and earlier years is still under consideration for a variety of reasons, including late submission, lack of adequate details, a need to refer to experts or to investigate escape likelihood here and on the Continent, the occasional intentional delay pending better definition of identification criteria, the requirement, for records of species new to Britain, to be verified also by the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee, and several other factors.

Pre-1987 records with which the Committee is currently involved include several Little Shearwaters *Puffinus assimilis*, Wilson's Petrels *Oceanites oceanicus* and Madeiran Petrels *Oceanodroma castro*, Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, Saker *Falco cherrug*, two Red-necked Stints *Calidris ruficollis*, two Long-toed Stints *C. subminuta*, several South Polar Skuas *Stercorarius maccormicki*, Rufous Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*, Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus*, two American Pipits *Anthus rubescens*, two Blyth's Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus dumetorum*, Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*, four Short-toed Treecreepers *Certhia brachydactyla*, several Arctic Redpolls *Carduelis hornemanni*, two Pine Buntings *Emberiza leucocephalos*, and six Yellow-headed Blackbirds *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*.

The Committee is also engaged upon reviews of both past and pending records of black-headed Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava feldegg*, Citrine Wagtails *M. citreola*, Olivaceous Warblers *Hippolais pallida* and Isabelline Shrikes *Lanius isabellinus*.

Pre-1987 records still being investigated by the BOU Records Committee include those concerning Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos*, Falcated Duck *Anas falcata*, Barrow's Goldeneye *Bucephala islandica*, White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*, Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*, Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*, Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius*, White-winged Lark *Melanocorypha leucoptera*, Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*, Stonechat *Saxicola torquata variegata*, Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*, Varied Thrush *Zoothera naevia*, Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys*, Chestnut Bunting *E. rutila*, and Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris*.

### Acknowledgments

We wish to express our gratitude to observers and to county and regional recorders, bird observatory wardens and reserve wardens and their committees for their continued co-operation upon which the work of the Rarities Committee is totally dependent, and without which this report would not be so complete and accurate. We should like to thank the Irish Rare Birds Committee and the Northern Ireland Bird Records Committee for permission to include their accepted records, and their respective secretaries, Patrick Smiddy and Mrs P. M. Vizard, for supplying the details which enable us to provide a complete review and running totals of all rare bird records in the geographical unit of Britain and Ireland. We are grateful to Trevor Copp for liaising over Channel Islands rarity records, which are adjudicated by the Committee: accepted records are included in the report, but not in the running totals.



In addition, we are indebted to many individuals and organisations for assistance during the past year. R. A. Hume has written the report's species comments and D. J. Britton has again compiled the running totals for each species. Dr J. T. R. Sharrock joined the Committee for a two-month spell whilst T. P. Inskipp was abroad. The Seabirds Advisory Panel, whose members are P. Harrison (Secretary), P. R. Colston, W. F. Curtis, J. Enticott and B. A. E. Marr, enjoyed its first full year and the BTO, the NCC, the RSPB and the British Museum (Natural History), Tring, have liaised over various matters.

We wish to thank all photographers who have submitted pictures of rarities, a selection of which enhances this report. Photographs and slides, whether or not of sufficient quality for publication, are invariably of great assistance during the process of record assessment, and we wish to encourage their submission along with the written record. We are grateful to those observers who included drawings of rarities in their record submissions. Such sketches, even those with little artistic merit, are of great value to the Committee, but it must be stressed that all drawings should be representations of the bird in question and not general sketches of the species. Some of the drawings submitted with records are included in this report. PGL

## Systematic list of accepted records

The principles and procedures followed in considering records were explained in the 1958 report (*Brit. Birds* 53: 155-158). The systematic list is set out in the same way as in the 1986 report (80: 516-571). The following points show the basis on which the list has been compiled.

(i) The details included for each record are (1) county; (2) locality; (3) number of birds if more than one, and age and sex if known (in the case of spring and summer records, however, the age is normally given only where the bird concerned was not in adult plumage); (4) if trapped or found dead and where specimen is stored, if known; (5) date(s); and (6) observer(s) up to three in number, in alphabetical order. In accordance with our declared policy (see *Brit. Birds* 68: 1-4), the new county names have been used, and observers are asked to bear this in mind when submitting records.

(ii) In general, this report is confined to records which are regarded as certain, and 'probables' are not included. In the case of the very similar Long-billed *Limnodromus scolopaceus* and Short-billed Dowitchers *L. griseus*, however, we are continuing to publish indeterminate records, and this also applies to observations of pratincoles *Glareola* and of such difficult groups as albatrosses *Diomedea* and frigatebirds *Fregata*.

(iii) The sequence of species, English names and specific nomenclature follow *The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1984). Any sight records of subspecies (including those of birds trapped and released) are normally referred to as 'showing the characters' of the race concerned.

(iv) The three numbers in brackets after each species' name refer respectively to the total number of individuals recorded in Britain and Ireland (excluding those 'At sea') (1) to the end of 1957, (2) for the period since the formation of the Rarities Committee in 1958, but excluding (3) the current year. The decision as to whether one or more individuals was involved is often difficult and rather arbitrary, but the consensus of members is indicated by 'possibly the same' (counted as different in the totals), 'probably the same' (counted as the same in totals), or 'the same' when the evidence is certain or overwhelming. An identical approach is applied to records of the same species recurring at the same locality after a



lapse of time, including those which occur annually at the same or a nearby site. In considering claims of more than one individual at the same or adjacent localities, the Committee usually requires firm evidence before more than one is counted in the

totals. A detailed breakdown of the figures for previous years is held by the Honorary Secretary.

(v) The world breeding range is given in brackets at the beginning of each species comment.

### **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* (18, 91, 10)

**Greater Manchester** Audenshaw Reservoirs, adult, 7th to 8th December (R. Adderley, D. G. Lowe, R. Travis).

**Highland** Dornoch Firth, Sutherland, adult, found oiled between 7th and 14th March, humanely destroyed at SSPCA oiled-bird cleaning centre, Fife, now at Royal Scottish Museum (Dr S. R. D. & Mrs E. S. da Prato). Sinclair's Bay, Caithness, adult, 14th March (E. W. E. Maughan, J. Smith); first-summer, long dead, 19th July (K. Banks *et al.*).

**Orkney** Papa Westray, adult, 7th and 17th May (I. P. Robinson).

**Shetland** Whalsay, adult, since 12th December 1986 to 27th March, same, 8th December to 1988, presumed same as individual first recorded 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 73: 402) and each successive winter (Dr B. Marshall, N. D. Poleson, W. Simpson *et al.*). Off Hascosay, Yell, first-winter, 14th January (P. V. Harvey, M. Heubeck *et al.*). Dury Voe, Mainland, adult, 7th to 15th February (D. L. Clugston, P. M. Ellis, P. V. Harvey *et al.*). Linga, Bluemull Sound, adult, 30th October (P. M. Ellis).

**Strathclyde** Loch Sween, second-summer, 21st to 24th April (J. & Mrs J. Hyde, S. K. & Mrs E. J. Welch *et al.*)(plate 278), probably same, 4th to 6th July (I. McGowan, R. W. J. Smith *et al.*).



278. Second-summer White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii*, Strathclyde, April 1987 (Steve Welch)

**Yorkshire, North** Filey, second-winter, moribund, oiled, 31st January, died about 2nd February, now at Woodend Natural History Museum, Scarborough (P. J. Dunn, F. Nendick, H. J. Whitehead *et al.*)(*Brit. Birds* 80: plate 70).

**1983 Shetland** Whalsay, first-year, 5th January to 16th March; adult, 22nd April to 5th May (*Brit. Birds* 77: 508), now presumed same, former probably second-year or adult.

**1984 Shetland** Bluemull Sound, adult, 6th November (*Brit. Birds* 78: 532), also off Holm of Heogaland, Unst, 6th December (M. Heubeck, R. J. Tulloch, R. M. Wynde per J. N. Dymond).

**1985 Shetland** Burravoe, possibly first-summer, 13th May (*Brit. Birds* 79: 528), as first-summer, 13th May to 16th August (M. Heubeck, J. B. Higgott *et al.*). Colgrave Sound, adult, 15th October (*Brit. Birds* 79: 528), 24th December (M. A. Peacock per J. N. Dymond).

**1986 Highland** Dunnet Bay, Caithness, two first-summers or second-winters, another, age uncertain, one or another, occasionally two or all three, 17th August to at least 27th September (C. C. McGuigan, E. W. E. Maughan, G. C. Stephenson *et al.*).

**1986 Shetland** Whalsay, adult, 15th November 1985 to 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 528), to 3rd May, 12th December to 1987 (Dr B. Marshall per J. N. Dymond). Off Holm of Heogaland, Unst, probably adult, 23rd December (J. N. Dymond).

**1986 Strathclyde** Turnberry Lighthouse, adult, 20th April (B. D. & Mrs E. Kerr).

(Arctic Russia eastwards to Arctic Canada) The year 1986 moves up to

a clear record, with 1987 hot on its heels. The inland record in Greater Manchester is extraordinary, as was the 1986 trio in Highland. The pattern of returning individuals in Shetland is becoming clearer; it also requires adjustments to the totals for 1980 (reduce by one) and 1983 (reduce by three).

**Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* (0, 9, 3)

**Dumfries & Galloway** Lochmaben, 24th to 25th April (Dr N. Armstrong, D. & Miss S. Skilling, R. T. Smith *et al.*).

**Glamorgan, Mid** Kenfig, 31st January to 25th April; presumed same, 31st October to 1st April 1988 (R. G. Hogarth, S. J. Moon, H. Nicholls *et al.*)(plate 162).

(The Americas) Also the first Irish record: at Lady's Island Lake, Co. Wexford, from 24th May to 19th June. The first new arrivals since one in North Wales in 1984. South Wales had not been visited before this individual, which was destined to become a typically long stayer, recalling earlier ones at Chew Valley Lake, Somerset, now Avon (1965 to 1968), and South Uist (1983 to 1985); the Dumfries & Galloway record is the second for the county, after one there in 1975.

**Black-browed Albatross** *Diomedea melanophris* (2, 24, 0)

**Shetland** Hermaness, Unst, first seen 1972 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 521), again present, 16th February to 2nd July (per J. N. Dymond).

(Southern oceans) A belated report of one in Ireland, off Inishglora, Co. Mayo, on 11th and 13th August 1986. Several reports of this species remain under consideration in consultation with the Seabirds Advisory Panel.

**Bulwer's Petrel** *Bulweria bulwerii* (2, 1, 0)

(Atlantic and Pacific Oceans) The record of one off Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 26th August 1965 is no longer considered acceptable by the Irish Rare Birds Committee (this leaves only one Irish record, in August 1975).

**Wilson's Petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* (4, 9, 1)

**1986 Cornwall** St Ives, two, 26th August (D. S. Flumm *et al.*).

**1986 Dyfed** Strumble Head, 3rd September (G. H. Rees *et al.*).

**1986 At sea** North Atlantic, sea area Sole, 49° 25.16' N 7° 5.32' W, about 113 km southwest of Bishop Rock, Scilly, 10th August (S. J. M. Gantlett *et al.*); similar area, seven, 13th August: 49° 26.55' N 7° 3.81' W, about 71 km southwest of Bishop Rock (K. Hall, P. Harrison, K. Pellow *et al.*)(fig. 1); 49° 26.55' N 7° 3.81' W (D. J. Odell, C. Towe, R. White *et al.*); 49° 20' N 7° 2.86' W, about 88 km southwest of Bishop Rock (C. Baines, A. & Mrs L. A. Tate *et al.*); 49° 20' N 7° 2.86' W (J. C. Gregory, M. Grunwell, S. Horridge); 49° 23.15' N 7° 24' W (P. Harrison); 49° 01' N 7° 41.3' W (P. Flint); 49° 19.7' N 7° 22.75' W, about 113 km southwest of Bishop Rock (D. S. H. Coates, M. Edgecombe, J. A. Hazell *et al.*).

(Southern oceans) In Ireland, one off Ramore Head, Portrush, Co. Antrim, on 24th September, and singles at sea, 56 km west of Burtonport, Co. Donegal, on 15th August, and 13 km southwest of Mizen Head, Co. Cork, on 29th August. There was one off Bridges of Ross, Co. Clare, on 18th August 1985. A large number of records from the Western Approaches have still to be dealt with. Pelagic trips have (not unexpected-

ly) transformed records of this species; only in 1983 did the total number recorded break into double figures, and now we have them seven at a time. Note that 'At sea' records are not included in the totals.

WILSON'S PETREL. *Oceanites oceanicus*

AT SEA APPROX. 60 MILES S/WEST OF SCILLY.

13TH. AUGUST 1986.

NARROWER, MORE POINTED WING  
OF STORM PETREL. UPPERWING  
UNIFORM WITH VERY  
INDISTINCT COVERT LINE.



NARROWER, MORE  
PARALLEL TAIL OF  
STORM PETREL.

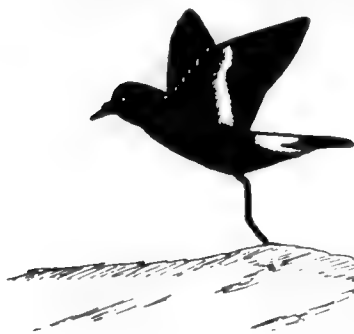
WINGS BROADER, MORE ROUNDED TIPS  
THAN STORM PETREL. UPPERWING WITH  
PROMINENT PALE BROWNISH-GRAY BAR  
ACROSS COVERTS.



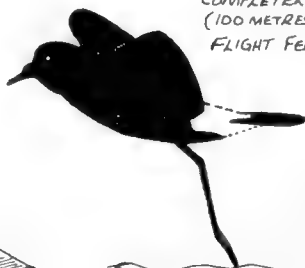
FEET PROJECTING OBVIOUSLY  
BEYOND TAIL, RECALLING  
A WOOD SANDPIPER IN  
THIS RESPECT.

TAIL WIDER, SLIGHTLY FAN-SHAPED.  
THIS AND THE WINGS CONTRIBUTING  
TO THE OBVIOUS OVERALL LARGER  
SIZE, WHEN COMPARED TO THE  
ACCOMPANYING STORM PETRELS.

UNDERWING OF STORM PETREL SHOWING  
OBVIOUS WHITE DIAGONAL BAR.  
WHITE AREA OF RUMP AND UPERTAIL COVERTS  
WITH VERY LITTLE LATERAL EXTENSION.



UNDERWING OF WILSON'S PETREL APPEARING  
COMPLETELY UNIFORM AT MEDIUM RANGE  
(100 METRES), THOUGH AT VERY CLOSE RANGE  
FLIGHT FEATHERS PALER THAN COVERTS.



WHITE AREA OF RUMP AND  
UNDER/UPPER TAIL COVERTS WITH  
LARGE LATERAL EXTENSION,  
GIVING A MUCH MORE NOTICEABLE  
WHITE PATCH FROM SIDE ON VIEW  
AND SEPARATING THE BLACK AREAS  
OF TAIL AND BODY.

FEEDING ACTION OF STORM PETREL WITH  
MANY RAPID FLUTTERING WING-BEATS  
AND FEET PATTERING CONTINUALLY ON  
WATER SURFACE, OCCASIONALLY HOLDING  
STATIONARY POSITION; WINGS HELD IN A HIGH  
VEE SHAPE AND BODY MORE ANGULARLY  
ERECT WHEN COMPARED WITH WILSON'S.

(SKETCHES FROM FIELD NOTES)  
TAKEN ON THE DAY.

(J.A. HAZELL.)  
15-AUG. 1986

FEEDING ACTION OF WILSON'S PETREL WITH FEWER  
MORE LEISURELY WING-BEATS THAN STORM PETREL.  
FACING INTO WIND AND HANGING ON BROADLY  
SPREAD WINGS, PUSHED WELL FORWARD AND HELD  
HORIZONTAL OR JUST SLIGHTLY RAISED, ALMOST  
BUTTERFLY LIKE. PROGRESSING FORWARD BY REACHING  
FORWARD WITH VERY LONG LEGS, PULLING LEGS  
BACKWARDS AND THEN BOUNCING INCREDIBLY OFF  
THE TIPS OF THE FEET A DISTANCE OF SOME  
THREE OR FOUR BODY LENGTHS.

YELLOW WEBS OF FEET ONLY NOTICEABLE AT VERY  
CLOSE RANGE (20 METRES), AND THEN ONLY FROM A  
REARWARD VIEW WHEN FEEDING AS ABOVE.

AT SEA: 49°19'71" NORTH. FROM THE "M.V. CHALICE".  
7° 22' 75 WEST

Fig. 1. Wilson's Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, at sea off Scilly, August 1986 (J. A. Hazell)

**Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus* (150, 148, 3)

**Scilly** St Mary's, ♂, 15th April (R. Frankum *et al.*)(plate 296), presumed same, 22nd April to 3rd May (P. D. Hyde, H. P. K. Robinson, W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*). St Agnes, ♂, 2nd May, additional to above (G. R. & Mrs M. Avery, J. W. Hale, J. D. Sanders).

**Sussex, West** Chichester Gravel-pits, ♂, 10th to 15th May (C. R. Janman, C. Leach *et al.*).

(West Eurasia, Africa and Australia) Two further records remain under consideration; all the same, a poorish year, continuing the recent run of reduced numbers.

**Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* (165, 166, 42)

**Berkshire** Thatcham Marsh, probably juvenile, age yet to be determined, 24th July to 6th August, again, nearby site, 30th August to 17th October (Dr R. L. Flood, S. Lawrence *et al.*)(*Brit. Birds* 80: plate 336).

**Borders** St Abb's Head, second-summer, 30th April (K. J. Rideout *et al.*), presumed same, dead, Coldingham Loch, 4th May, skin retained by J. Munro (E. J. Wise *et al.*).

**Cheshire** Woolston Eyes, adult or second-year, 26th May (P. J. Dalglish, R. Taylor *et al.*).

**Cornwall** Near Penzance, adult, at least 27th April (C. C. Barnard, Mr & Mrs D. G. Griffin).

**Cumbria** Longtown, Cumberland, first-summer, 7th to 17th May (A. Cremin, M. Tulloch *et al.*). Kendal, first-summer, 1st June to 20th July (D. G. Newell, R. Ward *et al.*). Dalton-in-Furness, first-summer, 15th June to 22nd July (Mrs J. Martin *et al.*).

**Devon** Brampford Speke, first-summer, 2nd to 7th May (D. J. Jarvis). Slapton Ley, second-summer, 4th to 6th June (R. Crossley, J. A. Flynn *et al.*).

**Dorset** Portland, adult, 17th April (P. M. Harris).

**Essex** Fingringhoe Wick, second-year, 16th May to at least 21st July (L. Forsyth, P. Smith *et al.*).

**Humberside** Swine, second-summer, 28th April to at least 2nd May, two, at least 30th April, one or other to 7th May (B. Richards, C. C. Straw *et al.*). Easington Lagoons, first-summer, 17th May, same as second Swine individual (S. Elliot, R. George, R. P. Mundy), same, Kilnsea, 22nd to 31st May (S. E. Duffield, S. M. Lister *et al.*).

**Kent** Sevenoaks, adult, 1st to 4th May (C. Bond, P. Meredith, R. H. Terry). Lydd, first-summer, 16th May (A. Harris). Bough Beech Reservoir, first-summer, 24th May (A. R. Benton, M. Narburton). Foreness, first-summer, 29th May (F. Solly, D. W. Taylor). Stodmarsh, first-summer, 18th August (P. W. J. Findley, I. D. Hunter, M. J. Pollard *et al.*).

**Lancashire** River Ribble, Preston and Ribbleton area, adult, 30th April to 5th May (D. Tucker *et al.*).

**Lincolnshire** Gibraltar Point, two second-summer, 3rd to 4th May (W. Paul, K. M. Wilson *et al.*).



279. Adult Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Norfolk, April 1987 (Keith Atkin)

**Norfolk** Blackborough End, adult, 26th to 29th April (A. Banwell, B. J. Best, N. Bostock *et al.*)(plate 279). Breydon Water, first-summer, 29th August (P. R. Allard, L. C. Street *et al.*). East Rudham, adult, 14th to 15th November (A. Banwell, K. Swift *et al.*).

**Northamptonshire** Thrapston, first-summer, 11th June (D. Caswell).

**Northumberland** Huppen Kiln Pool, second-summer, 17th to 18th June (A. I. Bowman, J. D. Searle *et al.*).

**Scilly** St Mary's, adult, 1st to 2nd April (W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*); another, 15th to 30th April (R. Frankum, W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

**Shetland** Rae Wick, Mainland, first-summer, 18th to at least 20th April (N. A. Lethaby, P. M. Potts). Loch of Spiggie, adult, 27th April to 12th May (P. A. T. Clabburn, P. Thompson *et al.*), remains of same, long dead, 10th August (per J. N. Dymond). Haroldswick, Unst, second-summer, at least 15th May (M. Sinclair, E. Thomason *et al.*), presumed same, Baltasound, 30th (M. O. Carroll, P. V. Harvey). Baltasound, adult, 31st May to at least 15th June (C. Corrigan, J. N. Dymond, Miss C. E. Vawdry *et al.*).

**Strathclyde** Loch A'Phuill, Tiree, probably adult, 20th April (M. Green, A. C. Knight). Lonbau, Coll, adult, about 21st April to 6th June (R. Mitchell, Dr G. M. de Mornay *et al.*). Near Lesmahagow, Lanarkshire, adult, 16th to 18th June (I. English, A. Wood, A. Young *et al.*).

**Suffolk** Holbrook Gardens, probably second-summer, 14th to 21st June (J. A. Lowe *et al.*).

**Sussex, East** Cuckmere Haven, first-summer, 4th May (R. B. Hastings *et al.*); second-summer, 4th to at least 6th May (R. B. Hastings, R. A. Hopkinson *et al.*). Near Arlington, first-summer, 24th, 31st May, 7th June (Dr C. & T. M. Brooks).

**Sussex, West** Chichester Gravel-pits, adult and probable adult, 5th May (C. R. & M. Janman, O. Mitchell).

**Warwickshire** Ladywalk, second-summer, 5th May (M. E. Griffiths).

**Western Isles** Howbeg, South Uist, second-summer, 26th to at least 30th April (T. J. Dix, W. McLaughlin *et al.*).

**Wiltshire** Coate Water, second-summer, 4th July (J. Carr).

**Yorkshire, North** Filey, adult, 1st May (M. G. Richardson). River Ribble, near Settle, adult, 9th to 30th August (Mr & Mrs B. Shorrocks), possibly same as Lancashire individual.

**1984 Staffordshire** Longsdown Marsh, second-summer, 8th June (W. J. Low).

**1986 Dyfed** Maesllyn Pond, Tregaron, first-summer, 15th June (A. Davies, H. Jones, D. H. V. Roberts *et al.*).

(South Eurasia, Africa and the Americas) In Ireland, one was found dead in a fishing net at Lough Owel, Co. Westmeath, on 22nd April. Except for 24 in 1983, this species rarely reaches double figures in these reports. The year 1987 was clearly amazing, both for numbers and geographical spread, with a clear influx from mid April to early May, and another from late May to mid June.

### **Green-backed Heron** *Butorides striatus* (1, 1, 1)

**Lothian** Tynninghame, first-winter, showing characters of North American race *B. s. virescens*, freshly dead, probably killed by fox *Vulpes vulpes*, 25th October; now at Royal Scottish Museum (D. Campbell, P. R. Gordon *et al.*).

(North and Central America; other races throughout tropics) Previous British records were in Cornwall in October 1889, and Humberside during November to December 1983.

### **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* (2, 45, 1)

**Cumbria** Near Carlisle, 12th May (D. L. Clugston).

**Derbyshire** Thornsett, Watford Lodge and New Mills area, since 22nd December 1986 to 7th January (*Brit. Birds* 80: 522). Also in Staffordshire.

**Hampshire** Titchfield Haven, since 4th November 1986 to 11th January (*Brit. Birds* 80: 522).

**Staffordshire** Doxey Marshes, Stafford, 7th January (*Brit. Birds* 80: 522), same as Derbyshire individual.

**1986 Cleveland** Longnewton Reservoir, 10th October (B. J. K. Caswell).

**1986 Cornwall** Luxulyan, near St Austell, adult, freshly dead, 22nd November, now at County Museum, Truro (G. J. Conway, R. Tonkin).

**1986 Humberside** Hornsea Mere, 30th September (D. L. Gardner, C. Hogg).

(Almost cosmopolitan in tropics; nearest regular breeders South of France) Predictions of an increase after the nine in 1986 — now increased to 12 — may still prove correct, but there was little sign of dramatic change in 1987.

### **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* (23, 376, 31)

**Cornwall** Marazion, 10th May (G. C. Hearl, S. C. Hutchings, L. P. Williams). Hayle, 29th May (J. Hawkey). St John's Lake, at least 13th June (R. W. Gould); first-summer, 9th, 16th August (R. W. Gould, A. H. J. Harrop *et al.*). Restronguet Creek, near Penryn, 30th August (J. H. W. Wilson *et al.*).

**Derbyshire** Swarkestone, 23rd August (W. R. Crum). See Leicestershire below.

**Devon** Otter Estuary, 3rd to 6th June (M. Mitchell), probably same, Teign Estuary, 7th to 8th (M. R. A. & R. E. Bailey, N. I. Hamzija, P. M. Mayer). Yealm Estuary, probably juvenile, 31st July to at least 1st August (P. Aley, J. R. Smart *et al.*).

**Dorset** Radipole, juvenile or first-summer, 13th to 21st July (M. Cade, D. T. Ireland *et al.*), probably same, Stanpit Marsh, 26th (P. Morrison *et al.*). Stanpit Marsh, adult, 1st to 14th September (P. Morrison *et al.*)(plates 20 & 21). Puddletown, 18th October (C. R. Drake). Newtown Bay, Poole Harbour, 5th to at least 22nd November (B. Minnull *et al.*), probably same, Arne, 23rd December to at least March 1988 (R. M. Ward *et al.*).

**Dyfed** Horsebox Ponds, Llanelli, 4th May (G. & Mrs D. B. Harper). Pen-clawdd, Llanelli, 26th to 27th May (A. Richardson).

**Essex** South Woodham Ferrers and River Crouch, Foulness area, 6th to at least 28th November (L. G. Benson, A. W. Shearring, L. M. Wickens *et al.*).

**Gwynedd** Foryd Bay, Caernarvon, 28th June to at least 19th September (S. Hugheston-Roberts).

**Hampshire** Leckford and Longstock, 17th October (P. J. Puckering *et al.*), presumed same, Lower Test Valley, 17th November (J. Pain, A. Pow).

**Kent** Cliffe, 31st May; same, Cooling Marsh, 1st June (J. C. Martin *et al.*). Pegwell Bay, 11th to 25th October (A. Sapsford, R. Titmouth *et al.*).

**Leicestershire** Eyebrook Reservoir, 22nd August (M. Cassidy, J. W. Walker), probably same as Derbyshire individual.

**Lincolnshire** Holbeach Marsh, 15th August (P. Clement, N. P. Watts), presumed same, Witham Estuary, 15th (L. Proctor), and Gibraltar Point, 26th (M. Hughes), and Frampton Marsh, 7th September (C. R. & Mrs K. R. Casey), and Leverton Marsh, 27th (per A. Ball), probably same, again Frampton Marsh, 31st December to at least 26th January 1988 (S. Bevan, A. Golec, W. A. Temple *et al.*).

**Scilly** Tresco, 15th April, same, St Mary's, 15th to 16th (D. F. & J. M. Hurley *et al.*).

**Suffolk** Walberswick, intermittently, 6th June to 23rd August (G. J. Jobson, C. S. Waller *et al.*); same, Benacre, intermittently, 17th June to 18th July (R. Fairhead, J. Minihane, D. R. Newton *et al.*); same, Minsmere, 14th, 19th July (R. N. Macklin, J. Sorensen); same, Reydon, 23rd July (per P. W. Murphy).

**Sussex, East** Cuckmere Haven, 29th July to 10th August (G. W. Gowlett *et al.*), presumed same as July individual, West Sussex below.

**Sussex, West** Pagham Harbour, 29th May (M. J. Tribe, R. B. Williams). Thorney Deep, 26th July (C. B. & Mrs M. A. Collins); presumed same, Ferring Rife, 26th (S. W. Gale); also in East Sussex above. West Wittering area, juvenile, 4th to at least 20th September (P. & Mrs E. Catlett *et al.*)(plate 22).

**Western Isles** Between Benbecula and Grimsay, 12th to 17th November (P. R. Boyer, J. J. Gordon, T. J. Dix *et al.*).

**Wight, Isle of** St Helen's and Bembridge area, 10th May (Mrs G. Brazier).

**1985 Hampshire** Fareham Creek, 5th September, Hayling Island, 14th (*Brit. Birds* 79: 530), now presumed same; presumed same, Titchfield Haven area, 12th June to at least 15th September (R. J. Wilkinson *et al.*).

**1985 Yorkshire, South** Fairburn Ings, 23rd May (*Brit. Birds* 79: 531), presumed same.

Potteric Carr, at least 19th (D. Forbes, G. Richardson, T. Rhodes).

**1986 Cornwall** Par, 31st August (B. T. S. & S. M. Christophers), presumed same as Ruan Lanihorne individual, 5th September (*Brit. Birds* 80: 522).

**1986 Devon** Otter Estuary, 2nd May (Mrs M. K. Doyle), probably same as Thurlestone individual, 30th April (*Brit. Birds* 80: 522).

**1986 Dyfed** Laugharne, 22nd June (R. Ballantine).

**1986 Humberside** Blacktoft Sands, 28th June (A. Grieve, Miss L. Jenkinson, A. A. Murray), presumed same as North Cotes, Lincolnshire, individual, 29th (*Brit. Birds* 80: 522).

**1986 Lincolnshire** North Cotes, 29th June (*Brit. Birds* 80: 522), see 1986 Humberside above. Chapel St Leonard's, Skegness, 25th May (P. Sims *et al.*), same, Gibraltar Point, 25th (P. I. Andrews).

(South Eurasia, Africa and Australia) In Ireland, there were singles at Woodburn, Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim, on 12th May; at Bantry, Co. Cork, from 2nd to 5th April; at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 19th to the end of April; at Lough Beg, Co. Cork, on 22nd April; at Blanket Nook, Co. Donegal, on 20th May; and at Ballinafagh Lake, Co. Kildare, on 24th May. Also one at Fort Grey, Guernsey, Channel Islands, on 17th April and a late record of one at St Saviour's, Guernsey, from 1st September 1986 to 9th January 1987. Many long-staying individuals cropping up at several places, to be expected with such a conspicuous species as this, but still a good year.

### **Great White Egret** *Egretta alba* (10, 26, 0)

**1986 Strathclyde** Gruinart Flats, Islay, 15th June (G. Jackson, P. Moore).

(Almost cosmopolitan, extremely local in Europe) This was the day before a previously accepted record just 40 km southeast of Glasgow, and eight days before one in Norfolk. The year 1987 ends a run of ten with annual occurrences of this supremely elegant heron.

### **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* (90, —, —)

**1978 Kent** Dungeness, immature, 8th August (S. P. Clancy).

(North-central Eurasia, north to Netherlands, and Africa) This species is no longer considered by the Committee, but records for past years are still requested and published for completeness.

### **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* (26, 33, 2)

**Wight, Isle of** St Catherine's Point, 25th April (P. J. Barden, D. B. Wooldridge *et al.*).

(Eurasia and Southern Africa) In Ireland, one at Foxrock, Co. Dublin, on 16th August, the first Irish record. A very rare bird indeed; the previous 14 in the 1980s included eight in 1985.

### **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* (many, 43, 4)

**Buckinghamshire** Willen Lake, 29th May (A. V. Harding, D. J. Scott).

**Dorset** Radipole, 11th to 14th June (M. Cade, Mr & Mrs Elgood, P. M. Harris *et al.*).

**Kent** Stodmarsh, one of 1986 individuals (*Brit. Birds* 80: 524) 1st January to 1st March, 24th October to end of year; same, Seasalter, 31st January, Sheppey, 29th May to 18th August (per T. Hodge).

**Orkney** Holm, Mainland, since 19th September 1986 to 10th January (*Brit. Birds* 80: 525).

**Sussex, East** Pett Pools, two, 25th to 27th April (T. A. Hyde *et al.*).

(Almost cosmopolitan, nearest breeders in Balkans) Few after the dramatic influx of 1986, but still a wide scatter of reports compared with all other years since 1977.



**Bewick's Swan** *Cygnus columbianus* (0, 6, 0)

Individuals showing the characters of the nominate North American and East Siberian race were recorded as follows:

**Hampshire** See 1986 Hampshire below.

**Somerset** Curry Moor, adult, 12th December to at least 31st January 1988 (A. D. Fox *et al.*), presumed returning individual (see below).

**1986 Hampshire** Ibsley, adult, 31st December to at least 25th January 1987 (G. Armstrong, M. Reid, R. White *et al.*)(plate 280).



280. Bewick's Swans *Cygnus columbianus* including adult of nominate race, Hampshire, December 1986 (Louis Rumis)

**1986 Somerset** Hay Moor and Curry Moor, adult, 5th to at least 25th January; same, Durleigh Reservoir, 26th January, 12th February (A. J. Bundy, J. G. Hole, D. E. & L. Paull *et al.*), probably same as Hampshire individual.

(North America) Clearly worth looking for; these are the first accepted records for Britain.

**Lesser White-fronted Goose** *Anser erythropus* (47, 74, 1)

**Gloucestershire** Slimbridge, first-winter, 7th February to 15th March (D. B. Paynter *et al.*).

**1986 Strathclyde** Near Bridgend, Islay, ♂, 11th to 15th March (Dr M. A. Ogilvie *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe and Siberia) The only previous record from Islay was in March 1980. In 1987, a presumed escape was at Amwell, Hertfordshire, during April; and in 1986 there were others in Derbyshire in August and September, and at Sevenoaks, Kent, in mid November.

**Brent Goose** *Branta bernicla* (1, 37, 4)

Individuals showing the characters of the North American and East Siberian race *B. b. nigricans* were recorded as follows:

**Kent** Sandwich Bay, adult, 21st March (N. Odin *et al.*).

**Norfolk** Cley area, adult, 26th December 1986 to 22nd February (Brit. Birds 80: 525), to 28th;

another, at least 9th January to 28th February (S. J. M. Gantlett, E. T. Myers *et al.*). Stiffkey, adult, 11th January, presumed one of Cley individuals (E. T. Myers *et al.*).

**Sussex, West** Thorney Island, adult, 24th December 1986 to at least 8th March (*Brit. Birds* 80: 525), also Pilsey Island, 19th February, Stanbury Point, 21st (C. B. Collins); presumed same, 9th November to at least 20th December (C. B. Collins *et al.*). Pagham Harbour, adult, 11th January, presumed same as Thorney Island individual (R. W. White *et al.*).

(Arctic North America and East Siberia) In Ireland, there were two at Strangford Lough, Co. Down, on the remarkable date of 21st September; one at Tramore in December 1986 stayed until 3rd January. Late records were of one at Carlingford Lough, Co. Louth, on 11th January and, probably the same, on 28th December. Five other individuals remain under consideration. A problem with several is that they showed good characters of this race except for neckbands which were apparently slightly incomplete at the front; exactly what constitutes a pure example of the race is as yet uncertain.

### **Red-breasted Goose** *Branta ruficollis* (15, 23, 0)

**Essex** Althorne, Canewdon and Creeksea area, adult, since 27th December 1986 to 13th February (*Brit. Birds* 80: 526).

**Sussex, West** Pagham Harbour, adult, 23rd to 27th January (M. G. W. Terry *et al.*), presumed returning individual of 30th January to 3rd March 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 526).

(West Siberia) A north Norfolk record remains under consideration. An escape was in Suffolk, at various localities, from 16th November 1986 to at least 1st August 1987 (knock it off your list if you haven't already done so). This sensational little goose has been annual since 1983.

### **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* (22, 146, 18)

**Berkshire** Thatcham, ♀ or first-winter, 21st November, same, Theale, 22nd November to 1988 (Dr R. L. Flood *et al.*).

**Dorset** Stanpit Marsh, ♂, 3rd May (G. C. L. Dutson, M. Reid *et al.*), probably same, Brownsea Island, 4th to 5th (M. Cade, P. S. Read *et al.*). Lodmoor, ♂, 24th October (J. McMillan *et al.*).

**Fife** Eden Estuary, ♂, 28th to 31st January (N. Elkins *et al.*).

**Highland** Loch of Mey, Caithness, ♂, 4th to 10th October (M. Legg, E. W. E. Maughan *et al.*).

**Kent** Sandwich Bay, ♀, 25th to 26th February (C. Evans, R. H. Lawrence, N. Odin *et al.*).

**Norfolk** Welney, ♂, 13th March (J. B. Kemp, D. Revett). Cley, ♂, 22nd June (R. Chidwick, S. J. M. Gantlett *et al.*).

**Northamptonshire** Thrapston, ♂, 5th May (D. Caswell).

**Orkney** The Loons, Mainland, ♂, 27th June (E. R. Meek, S. C. F. Palmer, B. Starck).

**Oxfordshire** Dorchester-upon-Thames, first-winter, 28th February to 15th March (A. Brampton, R. Burgess, A. R. Collins *et al.*).

**Somerset** Wimbleball Reservoir, ♂, 30th January to at least 23rd March (R. J. Butcher, C. J. Gladman, B. Rabbitts *et al.*), presumed same, 28th December to at least 24th January 1988 (B. D. Gibbs, B. Rabbitts *et al.*).

**Warwickshire** Wasperton, ♂, 9th to 14th May (A. R. Dean *et al.*).

**1984 Humberside** East Park, Hull, ♂, at least 17th March (*Brit. Birds* 80: 526), 25th (E. J. Abraham *et al.*).

**1986 Cornwall** Hayle, ♂, 2nd November to 8th May 1987 (P. G. Akers, D. J. Chown, D. S. Flumm *et al.*).

**1986 Highland** Loch Loy and Culbin Bar, Nairn, ♂, 9th November to 11th January 1987 (R. H. Dennis, R. Proctor *et al.*).

**1986 Humberside** Blacktoft Sands, ♂, 10th March to 5th April (A. Burn, A. Grieve, S. Holloway *et al.*).

(North America) There was a female at Lough Foyle, Co. Derry, on 5th

October 1986; in 1987, two males were on Lough Foyle, from 10th October to 5th November; there was an adult male at Tacumshin, Co. Wexford, on 23rd and 24th May and from 18th to 26th October; another at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 18th October, joined by a second male on 25th October (one remaining until late November); and one at Rostellan, Co. Cork, from 25th December into 1988. Also recorded at Vale Pond, Guernsey, Channel Islands, from 9th October 1985 to 14th March 1986; another from 18th January to 8th April 1986, and one from 11th October to 22nd November 1987, the first records for the Channel Islands. The Berkshire and Channel Islands (and perhaps Northamptonshire) individuals must be returning from earlier winters.

### **Teal** *Anas crecca* (13, 244, 13)

Drakes showing the characters of the North American race *A. c. carolinensis* were recorded as follows:

**Bedfordshire** Radwell Gravel-pits, 12th April (M. J. Palmer, A. B. Tomczynski, D. S. Woodhead *et al.*).

**Cheshire** Woolston Eyes, 11th April (P. Dalglish, S. W. Kennedy, R. D. Riley).

**Cornwall** Stithians Reservoir, since 15th November 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 527), to 21st February (per S. M. Christophers), presumed same, 21st to at least 26th December (S. C. Hutchings). Crowdy Reservoir, 14th March (P. G. Akers, D. J. Chown). Colliford Reservoir, 28th November to 1988 (R. M. Belringer, A. H. J. Harrop *et al.*). Loe Pool, 19th December (M. P. Semmens *et al.*).

**Fife** Eden Estuary, 27th February, 12th March, 12th April (N. Elkins, G. Riddell, J. G. Steele *et al.*).

**Hampshire** Near Romsey, 28th February (M. Baker).

**Lancashire** Leighton Moss, 9th to at least 11th April (J. Bateman, P. J. Marsh *et al.*). Martin Mere, 16th November, also in 1988 (G. R. Clarkson, D. J. Rigby, C. G. Tomlinson *et al.*), presumed returning individual of 22nd December 1985 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 527).

**Shetland** Loch of Tingwall, 6th to 15th June (D. R. Bird, D. Suddaby).

**Tayside** Kinkell Bridge, 20th March to at least 9th April (W. T. Appleyard *et al.*), considered returning individual of same locality, 26th to 28th April 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 78: 537), and Madderty, 12th to 18th April 1985 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 535).

**Western Isles** West Loch Ollay, South Uist, 2nd December (T. J. Dix, J. J. Gordon); presumed same, St Kilda, 4th (J. J. Gordon).

**Yorkshire, South** Thorpe Marsh, Doncaster, 11th March (P. Sutton, J. Wozencroft *et al.*).

**1984 Shetland** Sandwater, Mainland, at least 20th March (D. Coutts, P. M. Ellis).

**1986 Humberside** Beverley, 11th to 13th March (P. M. Scanlon).

(North America) A belated Irish record of one at Rahasane, Co. Galway, on 6th December 1985; in 1987, one at Belfast Harbour Estate, Co. Down, from 28th October into 1988, and one at Lismore, Co. Waterford, on 8th January. A typical scatter of records.

### **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* (19, 117, 9)

**Bedfordshire** Dunstable Sewage-works, age and sex uncertain, 11th October (P. Trodd *et al.*).

**Cambridgeshire** Little Paxton Gravel-pits, ♀, 13th to 16th September (T. Robson *et al.*).

**Cornwall** Crowan Reservoir, adult, probably ♂, 21st September to 11th October (S. Bury, D. Lewis, M. Southam *et al.*).

**Cornwall/Devon** Upper Tamar Reservoirs, two, age and sex uncertain, 21st to 26th September, one to 5th October (I. Kendall, D. J. Rigby *et al.*).

**Devon** See above.

**Norfolk** Cley, ♂, 16th September to 13th October (T. E. Bond, C. R. Kightley *et al.*).

**Suffolk** Minsmere, ♀, 13th to 15th September (S. Abbott, D. J. Fisher, D. J. Holman *et al.*); presumed same, 24th to 27th (W. E. Oddie, I. Robinson *et al.*).

**Western Isles** Balranald, North Uist, ♂, 16th to 19th April (T. J. Dix, J. Vaughan *et al.*).

(North America) One at Quoile Pondage, Co. Down, on 26th and 27th April. Mid September is a typical period for arrivals; a good total.

### **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* (1, 206, 9)

**Avon** Chew Valley Lake, ♂, 25th April to 5th May (K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*), presumed returning individual of 26th April to at least 10th August 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 528).

**Cornwall** Drift Reservoir, ♂, 21st December 1986 to 1987 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 528), to 14th March (per S. M. Christophers). Loe Pool, ♂, 4th to 12th April, 9th November to 1988 (A. R. Pay *et al.*).

**Hampshire** Mockbeggar Lake, first-winter ♂, 22nd to 23rd November (J. M. Clark *et al.*).

**Norfolk** Hardley Flood, ♂, 2nd to 29th May (J. C. Eaton).

**Northamptonshire** Ditchford Gravel-pits, ♀, 16th November (N. McMahon, J. Moulton).

**Northumberland** Woodhorn Pond, Ashington, ♂, 11th April (M. R. Navin *et al.*); same, Holywell Pond, discontinuously, 11th April to 6th June, Arcot Pond, 15th, 25th April, Bothal Pond, 17th to 18th April (A. D. McLevy *et al.* per M. S. Hodgson), presumed returning individual of Holywell and Arcot Ponds, 29th April to 23rd June 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 528).

**Surrey** Frimley Gravel-pits, ♂, since 9th September 1986 to at least 6th April (P. M. Troake *et al.* per J. M. Clark) (*Brit. Birds* 80: plates 145 & 169).

**Somerset** Cheddar Reservoir, ♀, 17th to 25th November (D. L. Buckingham *et al.*); presumed same, Hawkridge Reservoir, 6th to at least 20th December (D. E. Paull *et al.* per B. Rabbitts). Hawkridge Reservoir, two ♂♂, 2nd December to at least 1st January 1988 (B. Rabbitts *et al.*). Ashford Reservoir, ♂ and ♀, 19th December, ♀, 26th, two ♂♂, 30th, all presumed same as Cheddar, Hawkridge Reservoir individuals (per B. Rabbitts).

**Yorkshire, West** Allerton Bywater, ♂, 5th July (M. Newsome, P. J. Willoughby *et al.*), presumed returning individual of 1986 below.

**1985 Hampshire** Blashford Gravel-pits, ♂, 31st January (*Brit. Birds* 80: 528), not same as 1986 Hampshire and 1986 Surrey individual.

**1985 Lancashire** Stocks Reservoir, Foulridge Lower Reservoir, ♂, 17th February to 24th November, also in North Yorkshire in 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 528), also Dean Clough Reservoir, 11th, 16th, 19th February 1986 (J. Metcalfe), River Calder, Whalley, 15th February 1986 (A. A. Cooper), Stocks Reservoir, 8th March 1986 (A. A. Cooper), Foulridge Lower Reservoir, 13th, 19th April (S. Duffield, M. J. Naylor); presumed same, Stocks Reservoir, 13th to 23rd December 1986 (A. A. Cooper).

**1986 Cheshire** Woolston Eyes, ♂, 14th June to 9th August (G. Baker, S. Kennedy, D. Riley *et al.*).

**1986 Hampshire** Dogmersfield Lake, ♂, 14th September (P. M. Troake per J. M. Clark), same as Surrey individual.

**1986 Lancashire** See 1985 Lancashire above.

**1986 Scilly** Tresco, ♂, 29th October (J. Hewitt, J. M. Turton *et al.*).

**1986 Shetland** Loch of Tingwall, ♂, at least 7th June, presumed returning individual of 1984 and 1985 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 528), seen 7th only; presumption now considered inapplicable.

**1986 Surrey** Ash Vale Gravel-pits, ♂, since 23rd December 1985 to early April, also in Hampshire (*Brit. Birds* 80: 528), at former to 12th April, also Frimley Gravel-pits, 5th to 12th January, 2nd February, Badshot Lea, 16th April (per J. M. Clark); presumed same, Frimley Gravel-pits, 9th September to 1987 (P. M. Troake per J. M. Clark), also in Hampshire.

**1986 Yorkshire, West** Allerton Bywater, ♂, 11th August into October (B. C. Forrester *et al.*), same, Fairburn Ings, 13th September (S. Dudley, P. Hill). See also 1987 above.

(North America) Single males were at Carrowmore Lake, Co. Mayo, on 30th May and Charleville Lagoons, Co. Limerick, on 20th June. New arrivals rather than returning individuals seem to be rather erratic in number; 1987 saw a slight resurgence.

### **King Eider** *Somateria spectabilis* (62, 125, 6)

**Fife** Tayport, ♂, 6th October (K. Brockie); presumed same, 21st November (R. J. Burness, J. S. Nadin, J. G. Steele), presumed returning individual of 8th January to 16th March 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 529).

**Grampian** Peterhead, ♂, 28th April (M. Innes); presumed same, Ythan Estuary, 29th April (R. D. Steele), 17th, 24th May (A. Webb *et al.*), 3rd to 20th June (S. Addinall, A. Leitch *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 80: plate 259; 81: plate 294). Presumed returning individual of 24th May to 3rd June 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 529).

**Highland** Wick, first-winter ♂, 25th January to 26th February (E. W. E. Maughan *et al.*). Brora, ♂, 29th January to at least 25th February (S. J. Aspinall *et al.*). Golspie, ♂, 1st January to at least 25th February (S. J. Aspinall *et al.*). Thurso Bay, ♂, 25th to 30th March (G. H. & Mrs K. French). Loch Fleet, ♂, 30th December (A. H. J. Harrop). Brora, Golspie and Loch Fleet records all presumed one returning individual.

**Shetland** Linga, Bluemull Sound, second-winter ♂, 14th January (P. V. Harvey *et al.*); presumed same, Yell Sound, 14th to 23rd February (J. N. Dymond, T. M. Melling, N. J. Watmough *et al.*); presumed same, Eswick and Nesting, 30th April to 10th June (D. Coutts). Raewick, Sand Voe and Tresta, ♂, 31st January to 21st June, 16th December to at least 26th April 1988, presumed returning individual of 25th May to 7th June 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 529) (J. N. Dymond *et al.*). Mousa Sound, second-winter ♂, 20th February (J. N. Dymond, Miss C. E. Vawdrey); presumed same, Quendale, 5th to 27th June (C. & D. K. Lamsdell *et al.*); presumed same, Sumburgh, 6th July to 10th August (D. Coutts). Grutness, ♂, 10th July (H. R. Harrop). Lunna Ness, ♀, 23rd February (J. N. Dymond, Miss C. E. Vawdrey).

**1981 Shetland** See 1983 Shetland below.

**1982 Shetland** Holm of Heogaland, ♂, 24th November (*Brit. Birds* 76: 488), also Colgrave Sound, 28th January 1983, presumed to have wintered in the 'Bluemull Triangle' (J. N. Dymond).

**1983 Shetland** Colgrave Sound, see 1982 Shetland above. Lerwick Harbour, ♀, 20th January to 26th February (D. Coutts *et al.*), presumed returning individual of 31st January to 8th April 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 516).

**1984 Shetland** Bluemull Sound, ♀, 20th January (*Brit. Birds* 79: 587), now considered acceptable; still present 12th February (J. N. Dymond), 17th April (*Brit. Birds* 79: 538).

**1986 Highland** Loch Fleet, ♂, 11th January and 27th April (*Brit. Birds* 80: 529), two, 15th April (D. R. Moore, P. W. Murphy).

**1986 Norfolk** Scolt Head, ♂, 5th to at least 14th September (B. Bland, D. J. Holman, D. J. Odell *et al.*).

**1986 Shetland** Sand Voe, ♂, 25th May to 7th June (*Brit. Birds* 80: 529), also in 1987. Sumburgh, first-year ♂, 4th July to at least 7th September, another 8th July to at least 10th September (*Brit. Birds* 80: 529), both to 22nd (per J. N. Dymond).

(Circumpolar Arctic) There appear to be many old favourites here, but the 1986 Norfolk individual is especially noteworthy, being only the seventh English record since 1915.

### **Harlequin Duck** *Histrionicus histrionicus* (7, 2, 2)

**Shetland** Sullom Voe, first-winter ♂, 16th January to 25th February (J. N. Dymond, M. Heubeck *et al.*).

**Strathclyde** Claggain Bay, Islay, ♀, 20th to at least 24th October (M. Porteous, members of Edinburgh YOC Group *et al.*) (plate 293).

(Iceland, Greenland, North America and eastern Siberia) This much-desired little duck has not appeared since 1965, when a pair (themselves the first since 1954) was watched at Fair Isle, Shetland, and later at Wick, Caithness.

### **Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra* (0, 3, 1)

Individuals showing the characters of the North American and East Siberian race *M. n. americana* were recorded as follows:

**Lothian** Gosford Bay, ♂, 31st December (A. Brown).

**1982 Cheshire** Frodsham, ♂, 5th February (B. J. Best, J. Bryant).

(North America and East Siberia) The only records except for one in 1979 and one in 1980, but, especially as the possibility that it may be 'split' as a separate species is being considered by the American

Ornithologists' Union, it is worth scanning your local scoter flock; but you do need a close view.

**Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* (75, 207, 18) \*\*

**Cornwall** St Ives Bay, first-year ♀, 4th, 17th April (L. P. Williams).

**Dyfed** Strumble Head, four ♂♂, 13th November (R. H. Davies, K. Lloyd, G. H. Rees), presumed one of same, Nolton Haven, 14th November to at least 16th January 1988 (N. A. Lethaby, G. H. Rees *et al.*).

**Fife** Largo Bay, 20th March to 1st May, two ♂♂, one ♀, 20th to 24th March, ♂, ♀, 11th April, three ♂♂, two ♀♀, 12th, ♂, ♀, to 1st May (C. C. McGuigan, J. S. Nadin, J. G. Steele *et al.*); ♂, 7th November, probably returning individual (J. S. Nadin). St Andrew's Bay, ♂, 14th October to at least 14th November, two, 17th to 24th October (N. Mann, Miss S. Rowe *et al.*). See Lothian below. All presumed returning individuals from 1986 (see *Brit. Birds* 80: 529).

**Grampian** Balmedie, second-winter ♂, 7th November (A. Lyndon), probably same, Rattray Head, 8th to at least 21st (G. M. Cresswell, W. M. Hughes, J. S. Nadin *et al.*).

**Gwynedd** Portmadoc, ♂, 25th February to at least 12th March (R. M. R. James *et al.*).

**Lothian** Gosford Bay, two ♂♂, one ♀, 16th February, probably later seen in Fife (K. Chapman, P. R. Gordon). Gullane Bay, ♂, 3rd to 4th August (A. Godfrey, P. R. Gordon, M. Griffin *et al.*), also probably in Tayside.

**Shetland** Aith Voe, Bressay, first-winter ♂, 23rd January (D. R. Bird *et al.*), presumed same, 15th February (P. Dale), Bressay, to 27th May (per D. Coutts), Catfirth, South Nesting, 29th (G. Palmer, P. V. Harvey).

**Tayside** Lunan Bay, ♂, 10th August (R. Youngman), probably same as Gullane Bay, Lothian, individual, 3rd to 4th August, above and presumed returning individual of 8th to 21st September 1986, see below.

**1985 Cornwall** Off Cot Valley, ♂, 23rd March to 26th April (*Brit. Birds* 80: 530), 27th (D. J. Holman *et al.*).

**1986 Clwyd** Abergele, ♂, since 31st December 1985 to 1st January (*Brit. Birds* 80: 529), 26th (D. J. Odell).

**1986 Fife** Largo Bay, two ♂♂, one ♀, 19th to at least 28th March (*Brit. Birds* 80: 529-530), ♂, ♀, 12th April (D. R. Moore, P. W. Murphy).

**1986 Grampian** Burghead, ♂, 15th October to 1987 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 530), only to 1st November (per M. J. H. Cook).

**1986 Gwynedd** Llanfairfechan, ♂, at least 23rd February, presumed returning individual of December 1983 to 11th April 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 538)(per T. Gravett). Bardsey, ♂, 24th October (P. J. Donnelly).

**1986 Tayside** Lunan Bay, two ♂♂, at least 14th September (*Brit. Birds* 80: 530), present 8th to 21st (J. G. Steele *et al.*); possibly one of same, Kinnaber, 8th September (J. G. Steele *et al.*).

(North America) One late record of a male at Ballinskelligs Bay, Co. Kerry, on 1st March 1986. Three (two males) were at Dundrum Bay, Co. Down, on 17th February; two males near Goat Island, Lower Lough Erne, Co. Fermanagh, on 28th May; a male and a female at Rossnowlagh, Co. Donegal, on 7th February; a first-year male at Laytown, Co. Meath, on 14th and 15th March, and a female or immature there on 15th November; and a first-year female at Nimmo's Pier, Co. Galway, on 19th April. Some typical records, including presumed returning individuals, but also some remarkable ones, especially the four flying together off a Welsh headland, and 1985 and 1987 reports from Cornwall.

**Hooded Merganser** *Mergus cucullatus* (5, 1, 0)

**1983 Buckinghamshire** Willen Lake, ♀, 28th to 29th December (G. Bray *et al.*).

(North America) Not recorded as apparently wild since 1957. The Committee does not pretend to have the full knowledge required to judge

the escape likelihood of this particular individual, but any other records should be submitted to help establish the pattern of occurrences; meanwhile, the origins of this one must remain suspect, but perhaps no more or less so than many other wildfowl noted in this report.

### **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* (5, 89, 10)

**Devon** Prawle Point, 16th October (D. A. Cope, N. C. Gobbett, P. Saunders).

**Dorset** Hengistbury Head, 4th May (E. C. Brett, J. H. Morgan *et al.*), also seen in Isle of Wight.

**Dumfries & Galloway** Lochanhead, 28th August (G., P. & S. Roxley).

**Gwynedd** Cefn Coed, Anglesey, 24th April (H. A. Knott).

**Hampshire** See Isle of Wight, below.

**Kent** St Mary's Bay and Dymchurch, 2nd May (S. W. Gale *et al.*).

**Norfolk** Hickling, 11th April (C. R. Jupp, D. Petrie, D. Sampson *et al.*); presumed same, Blofield, 12th (G. Bowen, J. Charman). Castle Acre, 3rd May (N. A. Driver). Repps, 9th May (J. R. Whitelegg).

**Sussex**, East Beachy Head, 4th May (R. H. & Mrs M. E. Charlwood *et al.*).

**Wight**, Isle of The Needles, 4th May, observed from Milford-on-Sea, Hampshire (B. D. Gee, J. A. Norton), also seen in Dorset. Downend and Ashey area, 11th to 16th May (J. Baldwin, J. C. Gloyn *et al.*).

**1986 Dorset** Stratton, 30th May (*Brit. Birds* 80: 531), also 31st (per M. Cade *et al.*).

**1986 Kent** Dungeness, 28th May (M. Bailey, S. McMinn, A. Willcox *et al.*).

(Most of Eurasia, Africa and Australia) One near Torr Head, Co. Antrim, on 28th April. The rejection rate for reports of this species remains very high, and particular attention to detail would still help a good record get through; nevertheless, a good crop of fly-bys in spring.

### **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* (many, 14, 0)

**1985 Humberside** Blacktoft Sands, immature, 26th October (Mr & Mrs A. Hall, A. Grieve *et al.*), presumed same as east coast individual, various localities, 27th (*Brit. Birds* 79: 539).

**1985 Suffolk** Walberswick, 13th November (*Brit. Birds* 79: 503), observer was P. J. Heath.

(Southwest Greenland, Iceland and northern Eurasia) This species is still considered by the Rarities Committee, and records outside Scotland should be sent to the relevant county recorder, as with all other rarities. Records from Scotland, however, should be sent to Roy Dennis, RSPB Highland Office, Munlochy, Ross & Cromarty IV8 8ND.

### **Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni* (11, 9, 1)

**Shetland** Fair Isle, ♂, 23rd June (A. G. Pitches, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

(South Europe, West-central and East Asia and Northwest Africa) The first since 1983, and the third in June; the two previous June records were also the most northerly in recent years (North Yorkshire and Humberside), although there is an older record from Aberdeen.

### **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* (100, 290, 15)

**Cambridgeshire** Little Paxton, ♂, 24th May (T. G. Gunton, D. & M. H. Lowe).

**Cleveland** Longnewton, ♂, 1st May (D. Raw).

**Dorset** Town Common, Christchurch, first-summer ♂, 23rd April (D. J. Hughes). Studland Heath, ♂, 13th, 16th to 24th May (G. C. L. Dutson, S. J. Morrison, S. F. Smith *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 80: plate 213; 81: plate 281).

**Essex** Hanningfield Reservoir, advanced first-summer ♂, 25th July (D. Rhymes). Abberton Reservoir, ♀, possibly first-summer, 30th July to at least 10th August (Dr S. Cox, J. Miller, B.



Smith *et al.*). Holland Haven, first-summer ♂, 5th September (Dr S. Cox, P. Loud *et al.*).

**Hampshire** New Forest, ♀, 2nd July (P. Combridge), 5th (C. Heyward, K. Ilsley).

**Humberside** Blacktoft Sands, advanced first-summer ♂, 15th July to 4th September (G. Carr, C. Gear, D. & D. Preston *et al.*).

**Kent** Stodmarsh, first-summer ♂, 25th April (J. K. Archer, Dr A. M. Hanby *et al.*). Walland Marsh and Dungeness area, first-summer ♂, 2nd to 6th July (N. R. Davies, M. Tickner *et al.*).

**Norfolk** Near Titchwell, ♀, 26th May (J. & P. H. Wilson *et al.*). Horsey area, ♂, 27th to 30th May (P. R. Allard, G. E. Dunmore *et al.*).

**Oxfordshire** Standlake Common, ♂, 27th to 29th May (A. Heryet, Mrs C. Ross).

**Sussex, East** Near Woodingdean, ♀, 3rd July (R. J. Fairbank).

(East Europe and south from Siberia) Like Black Kite, this species, often prone to providing only brief flight views, suffers a high rejection rate. Fifteen, with others still being considered, makes this the best year since 1981. A spring influx followed by a few midsummer wanderers seems typical.



281. Male Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Dorset, May 1987 (S. Morrison)

**Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* (many, 86, 1)

**Durham** Pikestone Fell, 7th February (D. Raw).

**1986 Devon** Lundy, 11th to 12th April (N. A. Willcox), presumed same as Berry Head individual, 31st March to 9th April (*Brit. Birds* 80: 532).

(Circumpolar Arctic) With falconers' escapes, possibly involving 'experimental' hybrids, perhaps increasing, proving a pure Gyr Falcon is not easy unless it is a 'white' one.

**Little Crane** *Porzana parva* (68, 29, 2)

**Clwyd** Shotton Pools, ♂, 18th to 23rd April (E. J. Abraham, B. S. Barnacal *et al.*)(plate 282).

**Dyfed** Upper Lliedi Reservoir, Llanelli, ♂, 30th April to 2nd May (R. O. Hunt, C. Jones *et al.*).

(Central and East Europe and West Asia) The ninth and tenth in March/April since 1958, but the first in Wales since 1967.



282. Male Little Crake *Porzana parva*, Clwyd, April 1987 (Pete Wheeler)

**Crane** *Grus grus* (many, 1,199, 29)

**Berkshire** Slough, first-winter, 11th January (P. F. Cook). Langley, adult, 11th January (C. Lamsdell), also seen in Buckinghamshire.

**Borders** Reston, first-summer ♂, first-summer ♀, 8th to 15th May (A. Brown, D. Graham *et al.*), two, same, St Abb's Head, flying north, 16th (K. J. Rideout).

**Buckinghamshire** Withybridge, adult, 11th January (C. Lamsdell), same as Berkshire individual.

**Cornwall** Camel Estuary, 8th January (Mrs J. Keat); presumed same, Marazion, 13th January (M. P. Semmens), and Newtown-in-St Martin's, at least 21st January to 13th March (R. Butts, A. R. Pay *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 80: plate 143).

**Derbyshire** Middleton Moor, 14th June (D. Hatfield). See Derbyshire South Yorkshire.

**Derbyshire/South Yorkshire** Burbage and Hallam Moors, 14th June (J. Hornbuckle), same as Middleton Moor individual above.

**Essex** Shoebury, 11th January (A. Perkins). Localities withheld, two, 29th May to 31st August, 16th and 20th September (per J. Miller).

**Grampian** Teindland, two, 8th June, 21st to at least 5th July (M. Borrell, M. J. H. Cook *et al.*).

**Gwynedd** Near Moelfre Mountain, Anglesey, 25th May (J. Evans, M. W. Smith), probably same, Aberdaron, 31st (E. T. & Mrs S. Urbanski).

**Hampshire** See West Sussex.

**Humberside** Willerby, 10th May (K. & M. K. Rotherham). Blacktoft Sands, 3rd September (A. Grieve, N. Holton *et al.*).

**Kent** Stodmarsh, three, 10th March (M. J. Pollard, G. Skelcher), probably part of party in Norfolk (East Coast area), see below.

**Lincolnshire** Seacroft, 25th October (K. Durose), same, Gibraltar Point, 25th (C. R. Casey).

**Norfolk** Cley, 26th March (S. Betts, T. Fletcher, E. T. Myers *et al.*); two, 25th to 27th April (R. J. Brunton, S. J. Wright *et al.*); 17th May (A. M. Stoddart *et al.*), same, Wells, 17th (A. G. Barstow, M. A. Beevers, C. Bradbury). Snettisham, 26th September to 9th October (Mrs B. Coombs, Mrs G. Crossley, P. Hugo), 22nd (per G. E. Dunmore). East Coast area, six, since December 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 532), to 12th January; three returned by 7th March; further three by 11th, probably same as Kent individuals; all six to end of year (per G. E. Dunmore).

**Orkney** Loch of Boardhouse, Birsay, ♂ and ♀, 27th April to 2nd May (G. Christer, Ms C. Gunningham-Harvey, B. Starck *et al.*).

**Shetland** Fair Isle, adult, 4th June (Mrs C. Thomson *et al.*). Exnaboe, Mainland, sub-adult, 5th June (R. L. Howells), same, Aith, Mainland, 6th to 8th (K. Alexander, M. I. Dowie), presumed same as Fair Isle individual.

**Strathclyde** Near Trabboch, Ayrshire, 15th to 25th October (D. B. Gray, W. Robinson).

**Suffolk** Walberswick, Reydon and area, two, 5th May (B. M. Wentworth *et al.*), same, Wrentham, 6th (per P. W. Murphy).

**Surrey** Thursley Common, 30th May (D. J. Eland, S. W. Gale, K. Morgan *et al.*).

**Sussex**, West Thorney Island, 27th to 28th September, also East Hayling Island, Hampshire (C. B. & Mrs M. A. Collins, R. J. Senior *et al.*).

**Yorkshire, South** See Derbyshire/South Yorkshire.

**1980 Cumbria** Wolsty, 20th to 25th January, probably since 11th, possibly discontinuously since October 1979, probably same as Flockborough individual, 30th September 1979 to at least 6th January 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 73: 503)(R. Spencer *et al.*).

**1985 Humberside** Blacktoft Sands, 10th May (S. Grover, W. H. Smith). Near Beverley, 17th May (B. Richards).

**1985 Shetland** Hillswick, 11th to 13th May (R. Gall, E. Gardener, I. Sandison *et al.*), presumed to be Fair Isle individual of 5th May (*Brit. Birds* 79: 542).

**1985 Yorkshire, North** Cayton Carrs, first-summer, 24th April, Filey, 6th May (*Brit. Birds* 80: 532), again Cayton Carrs, 11th (J. R. Hough *et al.*).

**1986 Humberside** Bampton Cliffs, 28th May (M. Davies *et al.*).

**1986 Strathclyde** Ballinaby, Islay, 13th to 25th May (P. Moore, Dr M. A. Ogilvie, P. Pierce).

(North and Central Eurasia, locally south to Turkey) Also two adults at Churchtown South, and later Ballymaloe, Co. Cork, from 27th December until late February 1988. No longer considered by the Committee, but earlier records should still be submitted. Three (in addition to long-stayers) on 11th January is mysterious, and a small, mainly northerly influx in June was notable, but no large flocks this year.

### **Little Bustard** *Tetrax tetrax* (92, 10, 3)

**Suffolk** Sudbourne, three, 20th December (R. Clarke).

(Northwest Africa, Iberia, east across South Europe, Asia) Undoubtedly one of the events of the year, but in a sensitive site from which information could not be released; anyway, they were soon gone. The first since 1975; all ten previous records during 1958-86 were of singles.

### **Great Bustard** *Otis tarda* (many, 14, 7)

**Norfolk** New Buckenham, two immature ♂♂, 7th to 10th February (A. J. Prater, R. Shaw *et al.*).

**Suffolk** At least five, probably six, possibly nine: Harkstead, four ♂♂, 16th to 20th January (A. Britten, A. Bothwell *et al.* per S. H. Piotrowski); three of same, Kirton and Waldringfield area, 18th January to 7th February (D. Finch, M. R. Morley, H. & P. Vaughan *et al.*); presumed same, Theberton, 11th to 21st February (B. & Mrs J. K. Harrington *et al.*); presumed same, Sizewell Levels, Minsmere and Blythburgh, all briefly, also 21st. Horham, two ♂♂, 14th to 28th February (Mr Alderton, H. Botwright, B. & Mrs M. Hart *et al.*); presumed same, Benacre and Kessingland, 7th (B. J. Brown, D. R. Newton, R. Smith). Sudbourne, immature ♂, 7th March (C. Wright *et al.*), probably one of above individuals.

(Central and South Eurasia) Like those in 1979 and 1981, these were clearly associated with a January influx into Belgium and the Netherlands. Occurrences have been very sporadic—May 1936, March 1963, then in five years in the 1970s and four individuals in 1981—and this influx is without recent precedent. What a dance they led frustrated observers!

### **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* (98, 94, 31)

**Cambridgeshire** Nene Washes, 19th August (G. R. Welch).

**Cornwall** Par, four, 15th May (R. Lane).

**Devon** Powderham Park, 24th to 25th May (P. Edmonds).

**Dorset** Stanpit Marsh, two, 3rd May (J. Hunt, P. A. Stancliffe *et al.*). Radipole and Lodmoor, first-summer, 17th to 19th June (M. Cade *et al.*).

**Dyfed** West Dale, Pembrokeshire, at least 5th to 6th April (J. H. Barrett *et al.*).

**Essex** East Tilbury, 31st May (J. Miller, R. Tomlinson *et al.*).

**Gwynedd** Foryd Bay, Caernarvon, 5th April (S. Hugheston-Roberts).

**Hampshire** Pennington Marsh, two, 3rd to 7th May (R. A. Barrett, R. A. Harris *et al.*).

Winchester Sewage-farm, 17th May (J. Cloyne). Farlington Marshes, 11th to 25th July (R. P. Clay *et al.*).

**Humberside** Barton-on-Humber, ♀ or immature, 6th, 8th to 9th September (M. Broadbridge, G. P. Catley, D. A. Robinson); same, Winteringham, 10th (J. T. Harriman), South Ferriby, 11th to 12th (per G. P. Catley).

**Staffordshire** Belvide Reservoir, two juveniles, 1st to 7th September (S. Jaggs, B. Smith, K. R. & N. Stone *et al.*).

**Sussex, East** South Malling, 25th May (A. M. Wheeler).

**Sussex, West** Pagham Harbour, 19th May (T. J. Edwards, Mrs J. M. Withey *et al.*).

**Tyne & Wear** Swallow Pond, Wallsend, 15th to 24th September (T. M. Melling, B. Widdows *et al.*).

**Wight, Isle of** Binstead, 27th April (N. Boynton & family, Mrs F. E. Hudson, G. & M. J. Sparshott).

**Wiltshire** Collingbourne Ducis, 3rd to 8th May (Miss L. H. Cady, P. E. Castle, L. C. Cook *et al.*). Cleveland Gravel-pits, Ashton Keynes, two, 26th May (M. L. Buckland *et al.*).

**1983 Norfolk** Wisbech Sewage-farm, 29th April (J. A. W. Moyes).

**1986 Hereford & Worcester** Larford, Worcestershire, 14th to 16th June (B. Westwood, S. M. Whitehouse *et al.*).

**1986 Yorkshire, South** Wilsic and Wadsworth area, 17th August (K. Rich).

(Southern Eurasia, Africa, the Americas and Australia) In Ireland, a male at Enistymon, Co. Clare, from 22nd to 26th April; one at Belfast Harbour Estate, Co. Down, from 19th May to 30 June; a male at Thurles Lagoons, Co. Tipperary, from 28th to 30th April; a male and female at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, on 10th May, and one at Akeragh Lough, Co. Kerry, on 9th and 13th October. Also one at Pulais Pond, Guernsey, Channel Islands, on 2nd May. A rather important record is yet to be reported to the Committee: a pair bred at Holme, Norfolk, and reared two young, which must certainly have been the juveniles seen in Staffordshire. The Norfolk episode represents only the third instance of breeding, the first being of two pairs in Nottinghamshire in 1945, the second an unsuccessful pair in Cambridgeshire in 1983. The earliest-ever was on 2nd April in 1985, so two on 5th April is surprising; otherwise, typical dates, but exceptional numbers.

### **Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola* (30, 40, 3)

**Hampshire** Mockbeggar, near Ringwood, 6th May (M. & M. Reid *et al.*).

**Kent** Minster, 23rd to 26th May (C. Evans, D. J. Howe, C. R. Newton *et al.*).

**Sussex, West** Pagham Harbour, 4th July (K. Benyon-Tinker, I. & D. Elliot, C. & P. O'Brien *et al.*).

(South Europe, Southwest Asia, Africa) The years 1986 and 1987 mark a return to typical form after two thin years.

### **Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola*/*G. nordmanni* (36, 73, 5)

**Devon** Lundy, 1st May (P. Bache, C. McShane *et al.*).

**Shetland** Near Uyeasound, Unst, 25th May (I. Spence).

(South Europe to West Asia and Africa) The totals include those specifically identified.

### **Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* (0, 7, 0)

**1985 Norfolk** Cley and Blakeney Harbour, 30th July to 22nd August, and 2nd September (*Brit. Birds* 79: 544), was first-summer or adult.

(Southern Russia east to Mongolia)

**American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* (3, 112, 9)

**Cheshire** Middlewich, juvenile, 20th to 24th October (B. Bowyer, A. G. Goodwin, D. E. Norbury *et al.*).

**Cornwall** Lands End, adult, 30th September (M. D. James, I. C. Whitehouse *et al.*), same, St Just, 30th September to 4th October (M. P. Semmens, D. Riley *et al.*). Hayle, probably juvenile, 8th to 11th October (G. Lewis, M. P. Semmens *et al.*). Davidstow, adult, 17th to 22nd October (S. M. Christophers, A. M. Jewels, I. Kendall *et al.*). Predannack, juvenile, 31st October (A. R. Pay).

**Humberside** Stone Creek, adult, 4th July (S. M. Lister *et al.*).

**Kent** Dungeness, first-summer, 10th to 15th May (G. J. A. Burton *et al.*).

**Scilly** St Mary's, juvenile, 7th October (R. Crossley, D. Goldsmith, P. I. Holt *et al.*).

**Shetland** Fair Isle, adult, 28th September to 11th October (A. Banwell, N. Bostock, B. Reed *et al.*).

**Yorkshire, South** Near Bawtry, adult, 5th July (M. Lynes, D. & J. Wozencroft *et al.*), presumed same as Humberside individual above.

**1986 Humberside** Whitton Sands, first-summer, 28th to 29th June (T. A. Ede, C. C. Straw).

(Arctic North America and extreme Northeast Asia) The best year since the 13 in 1985. There was one in May in Kent in 1982, and an April record from Cornwall in 1985, but spring sightings are very much the exception and September/October the rule.

**Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* (3, 6, 0)

**1986 Lincolnshire** Tetney and North Cotes, adult, 21st to 29th July, 3rd to 8th, 18th to 19th August (T. Baker, I. G. Shepherd, R. S. Slack *et al.*).

(North and Northeast Asia) The first Irish record was of an adult at Tacumshin, Co. Wexford, from 17th to 23rd August 1986. The one above is the fifth British record and typically at an East Coast site; the coincidence with an American at the same place (*Brit. Birds* 80: 534) is amazing.

**American or Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica/P. fulva* (6, 119, 9)

**1986 Lincolnshire** Tetney, adult, 7th August (T. Baker, R. S. Slack).

The totals include those specifically identified.

**Sociable Plover** *Chettusia gregaria* (5, 24, 1)

**Cornwall** Davidstow, first-winter, 19th to 20th October (J. C. Pett, G. P. Sutton).

(Southeast Russia and West-central Asia) This confirms the October peak for an otherwise erratic visitor.

**Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* (2, 49, 2)

**1986 Sussex, East** Rye, adult, 2nd to 4th August (P. J. Grant, Dr B. J. Yates *et al.*).

(North America) From Ireland, records of an adult at Fethard-on-Sea, Co. Wexford, on 26th July 1986; in 1987, a juvenile at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 18th to 28th October, joined by a second juvenile on 22nd and 23rd. Remarkable!

**Western Sandpiper** *Calidris mauri* (1, 4, 0)

(North America and northeast Siberia) The species is now removed from the Irish list after review of the records at Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow, on 14th October 1960 and Akeragh Lough, Co. Kerry, from 17th to 23rd September 1961, both of which are now no longer acceptable to the Irish Rare Birds Committee.

**Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis* (0, 1, 0)

**1986 Humberside** Blacktoft Sands, adult, 22nd to 29th July (B. Richards *et al.*).

(Siberia) The first accepted British and Irish record of this troublesome stint, in roughly the area of the country where it might have been predicted.

**White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* (24, 273, 9)

**Cheshire** Frodsham, adult, discontinuously, 24th to 30th August (M. S. Garner *et al.*).

**Hampshire** Farlington Marshes, adult, 10th to 16th August (R. W. White *et al.*).

**Scilly** St Agnes, juvenile, 17th October (P. Fuller, D. C. Gilbert, C. W. Stone, J. G. Threadgold *et al.*).

**Somerset** Cheddar Reservoir, juvenile, 16th to 28th October (P. J. Knight, B. Rabbitts *et al.*).

**Sussex, West** Sidlesham Ferry, juvenile, 25th to 28th October (A., I. & P. Whitcomb *et al.*).

**1985 Humberside** Blacktoft Sands, adult, 26th September to 11th October (R. J. Arnfield, A. Grieve *et al.*), additional to adult or first-summer, 29th August to 14th September (*Brit. Birds* 80: 537).

**1986 Hampshire** Farlington Marshes, adult, 3rd September (K. Ilsley, R. J. Wilkinson *et al.*).

**1986 Western Isles** Village Bay, St Kilda, juvenile, 9th October (D. Miller).

(North America) In Ireland, one at Belfast Harbour Estate, Co. Down, from 3rd to 6th August, and another from 5th to 10th September; an adult at Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow, on 5th and 6th August, and an adult at Tacumshin, Co. Wexford, on 8th August. Also one belated record, at Clonakilty, Co. Cork, on 28th September 1986. A typical pattern, but continuing the low level of reports in recent years.

**Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* (5, 120, 4)

**Kent** Dungeness, adult, 20th to 24th September (M. Coath *et al.*).

**Scilly** St Agnes, juvenile, 2nd to 4th October (C. G. Bradshaw, A. J. Fossey *et al.*), St Mary's, juvenile, 27th October (P. J. Grant, L. Jonsson, K. Mullarney *et al.*).

**1986 Western Isles** Village Bay, St Kilda, juvenile, 16th to 21st September (D. Miller) (plate 283).



283. Juvenile Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*, Western Isles, September 1986 (David Miller)

(North America and northeast Siberia) Also one at Belfast Harbour Estate, Co. Down, on 12th July. A slightly below-par year.

**Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata* (5, 14, 1)

**Kent** Sandwich Bay, adult, 4th to 13th September (W. E. Fletcher *et al.*).

(Northeast Siberia) Late August/early September is the typical time for this highly-rated wader, but as yet there is little real pattern to its geographical spread.

**Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* (23, 89, 8)

**Cheshire** Frodsham, 11th to 12th May (D. L. Clugston, W. S. Morton), same, Neumann's Flash, Northwich, 13th to 14th (D. & L. Goulding, P. Kenyon).

**Gloucestershire** Slimbridge, 14th June (B. Stewart *et al.*).

**Kent** Elmley, 24th May (J. M. Clark, J. A. Eyre *et al.*).

**Norfolk** Breydon, 4th May (P. R. Allard); 21st June (P. R. Allard). Hickling, 10th May (A. Currey, D. J. Holman *et al.*).

**Shetland** Urafirth, Mainland, 26th May (J. N. Dymond).

**Suffolk** Walberswick, 29th May to 1st June (S. H. Piotrowski, C. S. Waller).

**1985 Humberside** Saltend Marsh, Hull, 25th May (*Brit. Birds* 80: 537), full details: two, 22nd to 29th May, third individual, 27th (S. Griffiths, S. L. James *et al.*).

**1986 Dorset** Stanpit Marsh, two, 16th to 17th May (G. Armstrong, S. Davey *et al.*).

(North Eurasia) One at Charleville Lagoons, Co. Cork, on 2nd June 1978 is now accepted after previous rejection. The full details of the 1985 Humberside reports reveal an astonishing trio, for the second successive spring in the county. The year 1987 had records in late spring/early summer, typical of recent years; in the earliest of our reports, it was considered to be a late July/August bird.

**Stilt Sandpiper** *Micropalama himantopus* (1, 16, 1)

**Kent** Cliffe, adult, 18th to 25th August (A. & J. McKee *et al.*).

(North America) This splendid and well-watched individual was a typical early-autumn one; two other claims remain under consideration.

**Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* (180, 54, 5)

**Norfolk** Blakeney Point, 25th to 27th August (B. Bland, J. B. Kemp *et al.*).

**Shetland** Fair Isle, four, probably first-winters: 26th to 27th August (S. J. Aspinall, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 15th to 18th September (R. J. Arnfield, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 17th to 24th October (N. J. Riddiford, S. Thomason, J. Wilson *et al.*); 4th to 6th November (S. J. Aspinall *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe and Northwest Asia) The Norfolk record was a source of great satisfaction to its finders, with no great sniping from those who dipped out or may not have believed it, as it gave good views to many observers, despite bad weather. Four on Fair Isle equals or beats all records put together in any year since 1958, except for 1976. Exceptional numbers were reported in Finland in autumn 1987 (*Brit. Birds* 81: 333).

**Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (9, 112, 15)

**Cornwall** Camel Estuary, adult, since 9th August 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 537), to 19th April (D. J. Chown).

**Cumbria** Anthorn, Beckbrow, Kirkbridge, first-winter, 9th to 10th October (I. Kinley, D. G. H. West *et al.*). Anthorn, first-winter, two, 7th to at least 29th November, presumed to include earlier individual (D. G. H. West *et al.*).

**Devon** Fremington, juvenile moulting to first-winter, 4th November to 1988 (A. M. Jewells, I. Kendall, D. J. Rigby *et al.*).



**Dyfed** Gann Estuary, first-winter, 12th December to January 1988 (G. H. Rees *et al.*).

**Highland** Near Arisaig, Lochaber, Inverness-shire, adult, 23rd July (G. F. J. Baker).

**Surrey** King George VI Reservoir and Staines Moor, age uncertain, 4th to 7th October, 24th to 10th November, also Perry Oaks Sewage-works, 8th to 18th October (J. A. Hazell, P. Naylor *et al.*).

**1986 Strathclyde** Islay Airfield, adult, 18th to at least 19th June (R. Elliott, P. Moore *et al.*).

(North America and Northeast Siberia) In Ireland, records previously accepted as Short-billed, but now referable to this species, are at Lough Funshinagh, Co. Roscommon, from 1st to 10th October 1963; up to five at Rahasane, Co. Galway, from 2nd to 20th October 1963; and one at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, on 8th and 9th October 1966. In 1987, singles at Castle Espie, Strangford Lough, Co. Down, on 31st May; on the Bann Estuary, Co. Derry, on 13th September; at Lough Beg, Co. Derry, on 30th September, and at Belfast Harbour Estate, Co. Down, from 14th November into 1988; a juvenile at Rogerstown, Co. Dublin, on 23rd September; two juveniles at Lady's Island Lake, Co. Wexford, from 26th September to 26th October; one at Tacumshin, Co. Wexford, from 3rd to 18th October; and one at Ballymacoda, Co. Cork, from 6th to 15th November. A typical scatter, but midsummer records are rare.

**Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus/L. griseus* (31, 212, 15)

(North America and Northeast Siberia) One in 1986, at Fort le Crocq, Guernsey, Channel Islands, on 5th February. See also under Long-billed Dowitcher for Irish records previously accepted as Short-billed but now considered to be Long-billed Dowitchers. The totals include those specifically identified.

**Little Whimbrel** *Numenius minutus* (0, 2, 0)

**1985 Norfolk** Blakeney, Cley and Salthouse area, age uncertain, 24th August to 3rd September (*Brit. Birds* 79: 548; 80: 494-7, plates 247-8), was adult.

(Central and Northeast Siberia)

**Upland Sandpiper** *Bartramia longicauda* (15, 25, 0)

**1986 Devon** Topsham, 22nd February (R. H. Montgomery).

(North America) There are three December records, but this is the first in late winter.

**Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* (12, 47, 3)

**Kent** Stodmarsh, 22nd to 26th April (J. Harflett, D. F. Yates *et al.*).

**Lincolnshire** Witham Estuary, Boston, 8th to 15th August (C. R. Casey, S. Keightley *et al.*).

**Norfolk** Cley, 22nd July to 2nd August (M. R. Flack *et al.*)(*Brit. Birds* 80: plates 300 & 301).

(Southeast Europe, West and East Asia) Kent in spring seems a good bet for this species, but Norfolk definitely has the edge. The year 1987 saw a pair breed in Finland for the sixth time.

**Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* (12, 17, 0)

**1985 Strathclyde** Glenegedale, Islay, 25th October (Dr A. A. & I. Clark).

(North America) The second on a Scottish island in 1985, after a May record from Skye. Though rather late, there have been two November and three December records.

**Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* (35, 155, 1)

**1986 Hampshire** Farlington Marshes, adult, 17th to 27th August, trapped 25th (*Brit. Birds* 80: 540), joint finders/identifiers included D. Bell, P. M. Potts.

(North America) One at Tacumshin, Co. Wexford, on 10th May.

**Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria* (6, 18, 0)

(Northern America) The Committee would be grateful for details of an individual in Scilly which has yet to be reported.

**Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* (3, 25, 1)

**Orkney** Tankerness, 5th to 8th June (M. Gray, E. R. Meek *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe and Siberia) This mysterious wader from the east appeared at about the right time, though late May and July have been more productive than June. This was the first for Orkney.

**Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* (6, 78, 5)

**Cornwall/Devon** Upper Tamar Reservoirs, 9th to 16th May (B. W. & M. Litherland, K. Spalding, G. P. Sutton).

**Devon** Plym Estuary, possibly first-winter, 20th December to 15th February 1988 (E. M. S. Kilburn *et al.*). Also see Cornwall/Devon above.

**Hampshire** Titchfield Haven, first-winter, since 4th October 1986 to 11th January (*Brit. Birds* 80: 540).

**Lancashire** Lower Rivington Reservoir, adult, since 22nd November 1986 to 11th January (*Brit. Birds* 80: 540; 81: plate 284).



284. Adult Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*, Lancashire, December/January 1986/87 (Guy Shorrock)

**Scilly** Tresco, juvenile, 13th September to 6th October (G. M. Haig, T. H. Smith, A. Vittery *et al.*).

**Wight, Isle of** Seaview Duver, age uncertain, 22nd December to at least 7th February 1988 (J. C. Gloyn, R. A. Hargreaves, D. Nurney *et al.*).

**1986 Cumbria** Longtown, Cumberland, adult, 4th to 6th June (A. Cremin, D. Johnstone *et al.*).

**1986 Hampshire** Titchfield Haven, 4th October to 12th January 1987, trapped 25th November (*Brit. Birds* 80: 540), aged as first-winter.

(North America) A juvenile was on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, from 4th to 8th October. About average, but a single autumn arrival in Britain was rather poor, and wintering individuals seem to be becoming the norm rather than the exception these days.

**Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* (1, 191, 17)

**Berkshire** Lovell's Lake, Hurst, age uncertain, 30th August (P. Andrew, C. Clacey *et al.*).

**Cheshire** Burton Marsh, age uncertain, discontinuously, 21st September to 4th October (E. J. Abraham *et al.*); same, Weaver Bend, Frodsham, 23rd to 25th, 30th September (per E. J. Abraham).

**Cornwall** Hayle, age uncertain, 31st August (R. N. Mason, M. & E. V. Southam).

**Dorset** Radipole, age uncertain, 6th to 17th September (J. D. Fearnside, M. Whitelock).

**Grampian** Findhorn Bay, juvenile moulting to first-winter, 8th to 13th September (R. A. Mavor, R. Proctor *et al.*).

**Lothian** Aberlady Bay, age uncertain, 29th August (P. R. Gordon); same, Musselburgh, 29th (A. G. Gordon, Dr L. L. J. Vick *et al.*).

**Norfolk** Cley, ♀, 9th to 12th May (S. J. M. Gantlett, D. J. Holman *et al.*), Breydon, age uncertain, 16th August (P. R. Allard *et al.*). Snettisham, age uncertain, 28th August to at least 1st September (J. E. Corlett, D. Lake, J. Wilson *et al.*).

**Sussex**, West Sidlesham Ferry, juvenile moulting to first-winter, 18th to 26th September (P. Bowley, O. Mitchell *et al.*)(plate 19).



285. Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* (right) with Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* (left). Co. Cork, August 1987 (Richard T. Mills)

(North America) One at Belfast Harbour Estate, Co. Down (having a purple patch for Nearctic waders), from 25th to 27th August; one at Victoria Park, Belfast, on 18th October; an adult female at Tacumshin, Co. Wexford, from 23rd to 24th May, and an adult there from 12th to 15th August; one at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, on 21st and 22nd August (plates 247 & 285); a first-winter at Lady's Island Lake, Co. Wexford, on 23rd August; and one at Douglas Estuary, Co. Cork, on 17th October. A better-than-average year after the blank one in Britain in 1986. June records are not unusual, but there has not been one in May since 1982, and none so early as the Cley individual since 1975.

**Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* (2, 47, 0)

**Northumberland** Seaton Burn, adult, 31st March (A. I. & G. Bowman, A. J. Johnson), same as Tyne & Wear individual.

**Tyne & Wear** South Shields, adult, first recorded 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 541), 10th January to 24th March (G. K. Gordon, T. I. Mills, J. Strowger *et al.*)(*Brit. Birds* 80: plates 166 & 167); same, Shibden Pond, 24th January (per A. Armstrong), also in Northumberland.

**1984 Humberside** Hull, second-winter, 14th December (S. L. James), considered additional to those already published (*Brit. Birds* 78: 554).

(North America and Caribbean) The record year of 1984 moves on to six British and two Irish records.

**Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* (0, 12, 2)

**Cheshire** Neumann's Flash, Northwich, adult, 11th, 14th, 17th May (D. Quinn *et al.*); same, Rostherne Mere, 16th to 17th (G. & S. Barber, H. Fearn *et al.*).

**Cornwall** Helston and Porthleven, second-winter, 2nd to 6th February, 2nd to 22nd March (C. C. Barnard, A. R. Pay, L. P. Williams *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 80: plate 174; 81: 286 & 287); same, Hayle, 24th, 26th, and Marazion, 28th (per S. M. Christophers).



286 & 287. Second-winter Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*, Cornwall, March 1987 (A. R. Pay)



1986 Gwynedd Aber Dyssyni, second-summer or adult, 22nd March (B. Averis, J. P. Martin).

(North America) Since the first and second in 1970, and the next in 1977, this species has become almost annual.

**Bonaparte's Gull** *Larus philadelphia* (11, 43, 3)

**Cornwall** Drift Reservoir and Newlyn, adult, 2nd November 1986 to 8th March (*Brit. Birds* 80: 541, plate 173), to at least 22nd March (L. P. Williams *et al.*).

**Derbyshire** Ogston Reservoir, adult, 17th to 26th February (J. Calladine *et al.*).

**Shetland** Loch of Spiggie, first-summer, 23rd May (J. N. Dymond).

**Tyne & Wear** Whitburn, adult, 17th January (D. M. Foster, P. Hogg, T. I. Mills).

1981 **Cornwall** Mount's Bay, first-year, 16th March; Penzance, Newlyn, Hayle area to 28th March (*Brit. Birds* 75: 506), again Hayle, 29th (R. A. Barrett *et al.*).

(North America) Another good year, with the Derbyshire record, the first far inland (although there was one at Cheddar Reservoir, Somerset, in 1968), being really outstanding.

**Slender-billed Gull** *Larus genei* (0, 3, 2)

**Norfolk** Cley and Blakeney Harbour, two, probably a pair, 12th to 15th May (B. J. Cooper, M. Gilbert *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 80: 215; 81: plate 288).

(Northwest Africa, Southern Europe, Southwest Asia) The first since



288. Slender-billed Gulls *Larus genei*, with Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus*, Norfolk, May 1987  
(Peter Wheeler)

1971; with only two records prior to that year, these strange but lovely gulls were the highlight of the spring for many people, despite a much shorter stay than might have been hoped for.

### **Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* (0, 531, 62)

**Avon** Chew Valley Lake, first-winter, 26th December 1986 to 10th January, 12th February to 10th April, 30th April to 13th May, returned as second-winter, 13th November to 1988 (A. J. Merritt *et al.*)(plate 80); adult, 3rd January, 22nd February, 17th March (K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*); adult, 26th December to 12th March 1988 (K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*). New Passage, near Bristol, first-winter moulting to first-summer, 28th February (B. Lancaster *et al.*). Chittening Warth, first-summer, 10th May (B. Lancaster).

**Cheshire** Woolston Eyes, first-summer, 8th July (D. Riley).

**Cornwall** Hayle, adult, since 23rd December 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 542, plate 170), to 21st March; presumed same, 26th November to 1988 (L. P. Williams *et al.*); first-winter, since 24th November 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 542), to 26th April, presumed same, as second-winter, 26th July to 1988 (L. P. Williams *et al.*); additional first-winter, 16th to 17th February (D. S. Flumm); additional adult, 28th February (P. G. Akers, D. J. Chown *et al.*). Marazion, first-winter, 6th March, additional to Hayle individuals (P. G. Akers, D. J. Chown, R. J. Taylor *et al.*). Millbrook Lake, first-winter, 28th February to 1st March (R. M. Belringer, R. W. Gould, R. Smaldon); adult, 8th March to 5th April (R. M. Belringer, R. W. Gould *et al.*); adult, 21st to 22nd March (R. W. Gould *et al.*), same, St John's Lake, 28th (S. C. & Mrs P. S. Madge); second-winter moulting to second-summer, 16th March (D. J. Chown), same as Plym Estuary, Devon, individual, 19th February to at least 25th March below. Porth Reservoir, adult, 23rd September (S. M. Christophers, R. Smaldon).

**Devon** Plym Estuary, first-winter, 18th February to 6th April (D. J. Chown *et al.*); second-winter moulting to second-summer, 19th February to at least 25th March (D. J. Chown, A. D. Crawford, R. W. Gould *et al.*), also in Cornwall. Plymouth Hoe and Plym Estuary, adult, 11th to at least 21st March (A. D. Crawford, D. J. Chown *et al.*). Paignton, adult, 16th November 1986 to 10th March (M. R. A. & R. E. Bailey *et al.*), first recorded as second-winter, 12th December 1985 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 553). Saltash Passage, Plymouth, adult, 20th December (J. C. Nicholls).

**Dorset** Portland, first-winter, 13th January (G. Walbridge). Langton Herring, adult, 21st February (C. E. Richards). Lodmoor, adult, 9th to 14th February (M. Cade, P. Fisher); first-summer, 7th to at least 22nd May, also at Radipole (M. Cade *et al.*). Radipole, adult, 8th February (M. Cade *et al.*); adult, 19th December to January 1988 (M. Cade, D. J. Chown, P. M. Harris *et al.*).

**Dyfed** Aberystwyth, two adults, 28th March (A. D. Fox *et al.*).

**Essex** East Tilbury, adult, 22nd March (M. Clarke).

- Hampshire** The Kench, Hayling Island, adult, 29th November (P. M. Potts, K. A. Turner *et al.*).
- Lancashire** Martin Mere, adult, 3rd April (A. D. Fox, M. G. Pennington *et al.*).
- Merseyside** Seaforth, adult, 3rd January (C. Kehoe, S. Young); first-summer, 26th April (A. Bielinski, J. Moore, E. J. Smith *et al.*), probably same, 3rd May (M. S. Garner, W. S. Morton *et al.*), 17th (E. J. Smith) (*Brit. Birds* 80: plate 193); adult, 17th May (E. J. Smith); first-winter, at least 31st December (J. R. Hough).
- Scilly** St Mary's, first-winter, 12th to 13th November (C. D. R. Heard *et al.*).
- Shetland** Loch of Hillwell, first-winter moulting to first-summer, 27th to at least 28th April (P. V. Harvey *et al.*).
- Staffordshire** Westport Lake, first-winter moulting to first-summer, 14th to 16th, 21st, 29th March (D. W. Elmley, W. J. Low, J. P. Martin *et al.*).
- Strathclyde** Doonfoot, adult, 19th January to at least 28th February (R. H. Hogg *et al.*). Ardnave Loch, Islay, first-winter, 21st April (S. Holloway, J. Simons).
- Sussex, East** Cuckmere Valley, adult, 1st January (W. J. M. Scott). The Crumbles, Eastbourne, first-summer, 6th June (R. J. Fairbank).
- Warwickshire** Coton, Kingsbury, adult, 20th December (A. R. Dean).
- 1984 Dorset** Radipole and Lodmoor, first-winter, 8th November to 31st December (*Brit. Birds* 78: 555), see 1985 Dorset below.
- 1985 Cornwall** Millbrook Lake, second-winter, 23rd November (*Brit. Birds* 80: 543), identification not supported by two of quoted observers, no longer acceptable.
- 1985 Devon** Paignton, second-winter, 12th December to at least January 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 553), to 2nd March (R. E. Bailey).
- 1985 Dorset** Radipole and Lodmoor, second-winter, 8th November to 31st December 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 78: 555), 1st January to 14th April, when moulting to second-summer (M. Cade, M. A. Hallett *et al.*); adult, 18th to 22nd February (M. Cade, D. Elliot, Dr J. F. Ryan *et al.*). Lodmoor, adult, 10th February (M. Cade); first-winter, 27th March (M. Cade); adults, 13th to 14th April, two, 14th (M. Cade, D. Elliot, Dr J. F. Ryan).
- 1985 Glamorgan, West** Blackpill, at least ten, possibly twelve: adult, 15th to 30th January, possibly again, 13th March; adult, 23rd January to 22nd February; adult, 23rd February to 15th March; adult, 5th March; adult, 9th to 13th March; adult, 13th March; adult, 16th to at least 17th March; adult, at least 23rd February; first-summer, 11th April, possibly to 12th September; first-summer, 14th May, also possibly that seen, 12th September; second-summer, 11th to 15th April; second-winter, 28th to 30th September (R. H. Davies, C. Evans, R. H. A. Taylor *et al.*).
- 1985 Yorkshire, South** Redmires Reservoirs, adult, 19th October (P. A. Ardron, J. S. Holland).
- 1986 Avon** Chew Valley Lake, first-winter, 26th December to 1987, see above (A. J. Merritt *et al.*).
- 1986 Cornwall** Hayle, first-winter, 17th February (R. I. Allison, J. S. Hargreaves).
- 1986 Devon** Paignton, adult, 16th November to 1987, see above.
- 1986 Glamorgan, West** Blackpill, at least six, possibly eight: adult, 15th February; adult, 22nd February to 9th March; adult, 24th February to 1st April; adult, 6th April; second-winter moulting to second-summer, 23rd March to 27th April; second-summer, 14th April to at least 10th May; second-summer, 29th April to 16th May (R. H. Davies, C. Evans, R. H. A. Taylor).
- 1986 Hampshire** Eastney, second-winter, 30th March (P. M. Potts), same as Sinah Gravel-pits, 28th to 30th March (*Brit. Birds* 80: 542).
- 1986 Lancashire** Martin Mere, second-summer moulting to adult, 5th to 9th, 30th August, 23rd September (*Brit. Birds* 80: 542), intermittently to 20th December (per C. G. Tomlinson); first-winter, at least 23rd November (S. J. & Mrs J. A. Riley).
- 1986 Sussex, West** Wier Wood Reservoir, adult, 3rd November (N. A. Driver).

(North America) In Ireland, there were two adults at Sandymount, Dublin, from 3rd to 25th January 1986, and single adults at Galway Docks on 23rd February and 25th October 1986. In 1987, there was a big crop: single adults at Newcastle, Co. Down, from 14th November into 1988, and at Lurgan, Co. Antrim, on 28th March; and nine or ten at Belfast Harbour

Estate, Co. Down, with six adults in January and early February, up to four remaining until early April; a first-winter on 7th February; single first-summer on 14th and 21st April, one remaining until 19th May, and an adult or second-summer on 22nd July. There were two first-winters at Blennerville, Co. Kerry, on 3rd January; an adult at Wexford from 12th to 15th January, and a second-summer there on 18th April; adults at Sandymount, Dublin, from 15th February to 14th April, from 15th March to 12th April and on 28th March; a second-summer at Sandymount from 17th March to 17th July; two first-winters there from 14th to 20th April (one until 18th July); a first-winter at Galway Docks on 13th April; an adult at Clonakilty, Co. Cork, from 10th October into 1988, and another at The Lough, Co. Cork, from 22nd November to mid April 1988, with another adult and a first-winter there from 5th December into 1988; and an adult at Ballymacoda, Co. Cork, on 29th December. Also one at Fort le Crocq, Guernsey, Channel Islands, on 31st October and 5th November. The removal of this species from the list of rarities considered by the Committee will considerably reduce postage costs, the wear and tear of MJR's typing fingers and the not inconsiderable gnashing of Committee members' teeth. There is still a high rejection rate, something county recorders will do well to consider now that they alone have the burden of record assessment. Many of these gulls are presumed returning individuals of this species, which shows strong attachment to favoured sites (and is one of many rare species which raise the question of just how extensive site-fidelity is among less individually recognisable common birds). Of special interest are records in Essex, Staffordshire and Warwickshire; the East Coast is still largely devoid of sightings. Many records remain under consideration (particularly from South Wales), and unsubmitted reports up to 1987 should still be sent to the Committee, so we haven't lost these long lists from the report just yet . . .

### **Iceland Gull** *Larus glaucoideus* (0, 7, 0)

An individual showing the characters of the North American race *L. g. kumlieni* was recorded as follows:

**Grampian** Banff Bay and Harbour, adult, since December 1986 to 14th March (M. Innes, J. D. Law, R. Proctor *et al.*); presumed same, 30th December (P. T. Hurst, R. Proctor).

**1986 Grampian** Banff Bay and Harbour, adult, 25th to 26th December (*Brit. Birds* 80: 544), see above.

(Baffin Island and Northwest Ungava Peninsula, Canada) Annual since 1981, but, with one returning adult at Banff and irregular Irish records having a monopoly since 1983, claims that it has been overlooked before and will prove to be regular may be premature.

### **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* (2, 44, 1)

**Grampian** Girdle Ness, adult, 26th to 28th September (K. D. & Mrs K. A. Shaw *et al.*).

**1983 Yorkshire, North** Scarborough, adult, 11th February (N. C. Moores), previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 78: 588), presumed same as Cleveland and Filey individual (*Brit. Birds* 77: 534).

**1985 Highland** Thurso, adult, since 12th November 1984 to at least 7th January, also 19th (*Brit. Birds* 79: 556), also 20th (A. J. Booth, A. D. Mould *et al.*).

(Northeast Siberia and Canada) There were mid-August records in



1967 and 1976; this is the only other autumn record, although there have been several in April, May and June.

### Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (52, 172, 9)

**Cheshire** Frodsham, 31st May (P. Jordon).

**Cornwall** Marazion, 19th April (D. Foot *et al.*), 30th (D. S. Flumm, M. P. Semmens *et al.*); same, Hayle, 19th to 26th April, 22nd May (M. P. Semmens, L. P. Williams *et al.*); same, Nanjizal and near Sennen, 27th to 28th April (per S. M. Christophers). St John's Lake, 31st August (S. G. Christmas), probably same as Devon individual. Stithians Reservoir, 1st October (M. Reid, R. D. Riley *et al.*).

**Devon** River Plym, adult, 22nd August to 11th September (D. M. & Mrs E. Grant, E. Wilson *et al.*).

**Dyfed** Llanelli, 20th April (F. B. Jenkins, E. J. Smith *et al.*).

**Suffolk** Benacre, 24th June (J. M. Cawston, S. J. Ling)(fig. 2).

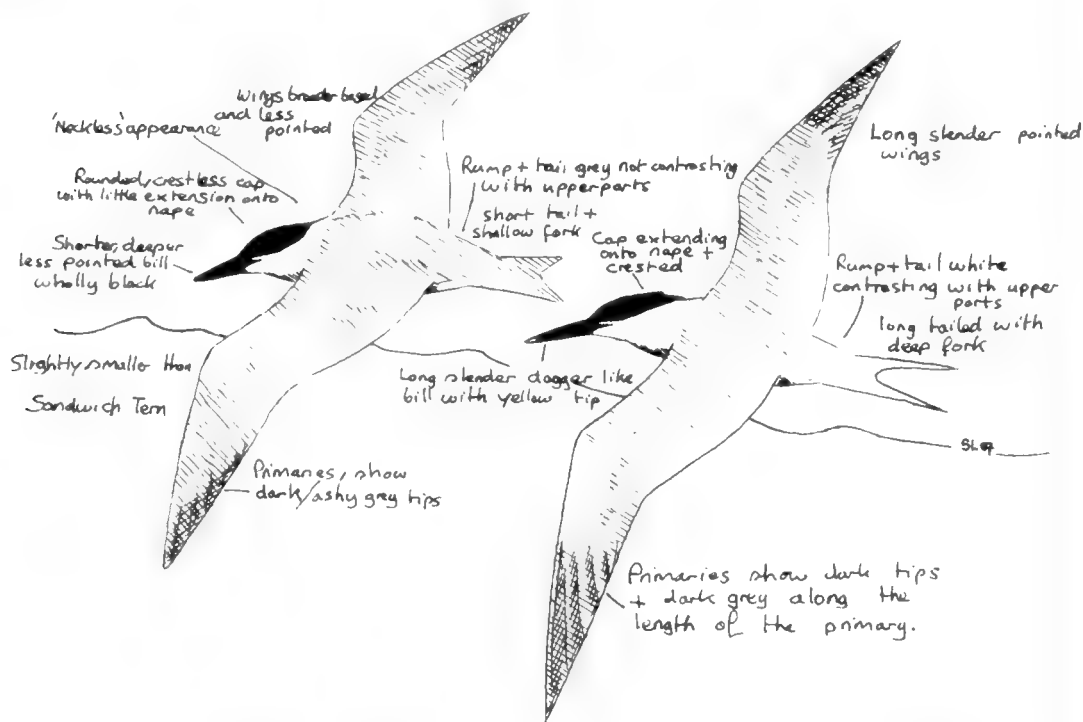


Fig. 2. Gull-billed *Gelochelidon nilotica* (left) and Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis* (right), Suffolk, June 1987 (S. J. Ling)

**Sussex, East** Langney Point, 20th June (R. H. & Mrs M. E. Charlwood); 15th August (D., J. F., T. E. & Mrs D. M. Cooper).

**Western Isles** Drimsdale, South Uist, 3rd to 6th May (T. J. Dix, Dr A. Hudson, D. B. Jackson *et al.*).

(Almost cosmopolitan, nearest breeding colony Denmark) The best year since 1967, except for 1974 (12) and 1982 (when 11 included seven at Beachy Head on one day). Arrivals on 19th and 20th April are the earliest since 1968, with one in East Lothian on 22nd March and one at Hayle, Cornwall, on 18th April. There had not been a long-stayer since the Norfolk individual of 1980; virtually all records are one-day birds.

### Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* (30, 137, 5)

**Norfolk** Hickling, intermittently, 23rd May to 5th July; presumed same, Breydon, 12th, 27th to 28th June, 4th to 7th July; another, 4th to 7th July (P. R. Allard, K. R. Dyer, G. J. Etherington *et al.*). Cley, adult, 20th August (G. M. Cresswell, G. J. White *et al.*).

**Shetland** Fair Isle, 29th May (S. J. Aspinall).

**Suffolk** Minsmere, 8th to 11th May (J. Oates, D. Whaley *et al.*).

(Almost cosmopolitan except South America, everywhere local) A good year.

**Lesser Crested Tern** *Sterna bengalensis* (0, 5, 0)

**Cleveland** South Gare, 14th June, 23rd August (D. J. Britton). See also Humberside and Lothian.

**Humberside** Flamborough Head, 9th August (D. Bradley, T. Davison, R. C. Hart *et al.*), presumed same as Cleveland, Lothian individual.

**Lothian** Musselburgh, 21st to 22nd August (I. J. Andrews, M. R. Leven *et al.*), presumed same as Cleveland and Humberside individual; and all presumed a returning individual from earlier years.

**1986 Northumberland** Hauxley, 2nd July (*Brit. Birds* 80: 545), also Farne Islands, 14th to 15th May, 20th May, 1st June, 8th July and 10th July when associating with chick in colony of Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis* (P. Hawkey *et al.* per M. S. Hodgson).

(North and East Africa, east to Australia) Presumably the same wandering individual from 1984; as identification criteria become better known, the severe problems for observers encountering it should reduce, but it is still not an easy bird of which to be sure.

**Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* (0, 13, 3)

**Cornwall** Hayle and St Ives Bay, adult, 27th January to 3rd February (C. C. Barnard, D. S. Flumm, L. P. Williams *et al.*).

**Gwynedd** Great Orme, adult, 23rd August (T. Gravett *et al.*), presumed same as 1986 Gwynedd individual (*Brit. Birds* 80: 545).

**Somerset** Hinkley Point, adult, 7th to 12th February (B. Rabbitts, A. M. & B. E. Slade *et al.*), presumed same as Cornwall individual.

**1986 Gwynedd** Penmon, Anglesey, adult, 25th October to at least 23rd November (*Brit. Birds* 80: 545), first seen 22nd (P. K. Jackson *et al.*).

(North America) One in Co. Wexford in 1986 stayed into 1987 (see *Brit. Birds* 80: 545). There was an adult at Sandymount, Co. Dublin, from 22nd March to 5th April, and an adult at Rosslare, Co. Wexford, on 12th July and later in Wexford Harbour on 14th and 15th September. Reports on a first-winter individual in North Wales, for which details were requested in last year's report, have now been received and remain under consideration; reports of two in Clwyd and one again in Gwynedd also remain under consideration, since the initial circulation was lost in the post. May and June are the only months for which there are no records.

**Elegant Tern** *Sterna elegans* (0, 1, 0)

(Pacific coast of tropical America) The first record for Britain and Ireland was in 1982: one at Carlingford Lough, Co. Down, from 22nd June to at least 3rd July, and at Ballymacoda, Co. Cork, on 1st August. Details will be published in due course.

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus* (20, 63, 8)

**Cornwall** Stithians Reservoir, 23rd July (P. & R. N. Mason).

**Cumbria** Rockcliffe Marshes, 8th June (A. Cremin *et al.*); same, Linstock and Aglonby area, 9th (F. J. Roberts *et al.*).

**Devon** Thurleston and Slapton Ley area, 12th to 17th April (R. Bower, H. & Mrs J. Huggins *et al.*), presumed also in Dorset.

**Dorset** Lodmoor, 18th April; same, Radipole, 20th to 23rd (G. Moyser, P. G. W. Salaman *et al.*)(fig. 3; *Brit. Birds* 80: plates 188 & 189), presumed same as Devon individual.

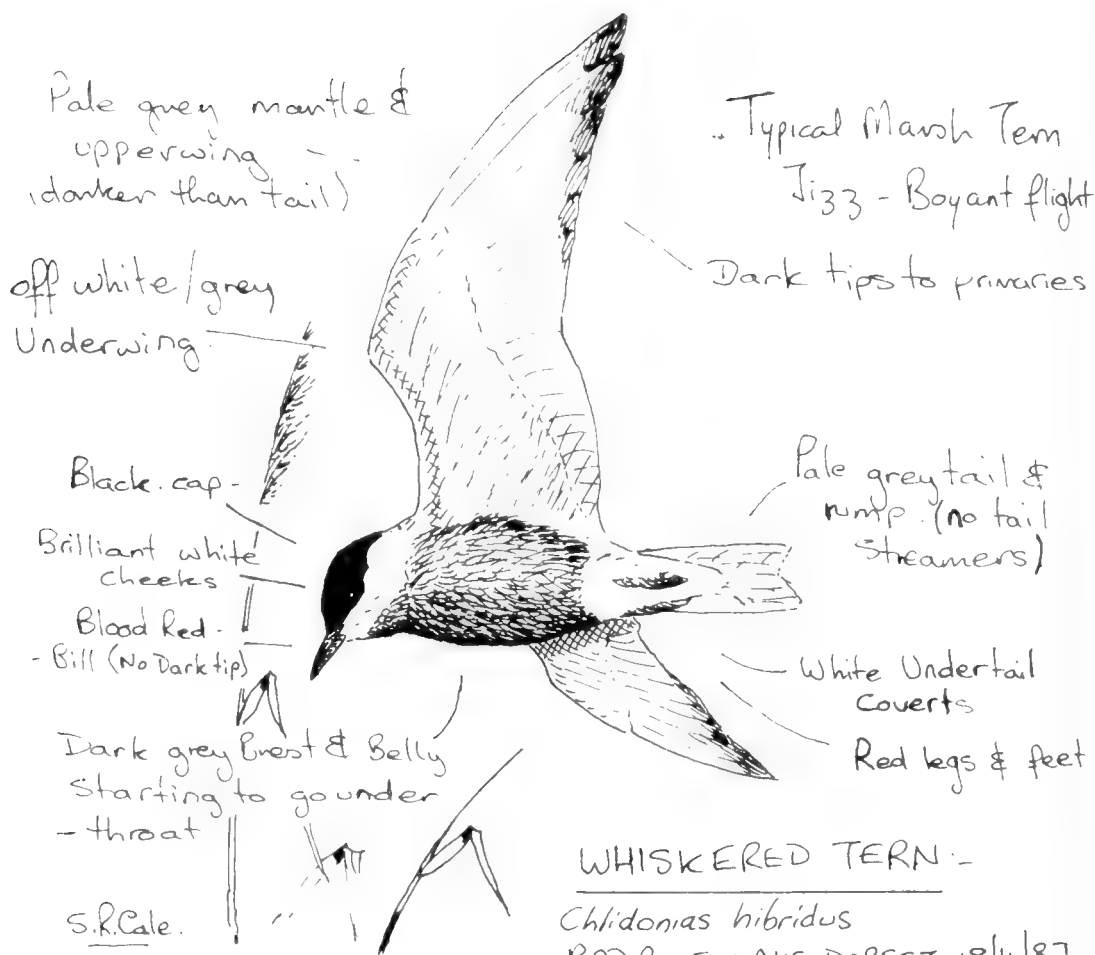


Fig. 3. Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*, Dorset, April 1987 (S. R. Cale)

**Lincolnshire** Covenham Reservoir, probably first-summer, 10th to 15th June (G. P. Catley, K. Wilson *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 80: plates 219 & 220).

**Norfolk** Pentney Gravel-pits, 30th June to 1st July (N. Bostock, A. Curl, R. Partridge *et al.*).

**Warwickshire** Kingsbury Water Park, 18th May (J. K. Higginson, E. G. Phillips, I. C. Whitehouse *et al.*).

(South Eurasia, Northwest, East and Southern Africa, Australia) An adult at Goat Island, Lough Derg, Co. Tipperary, from 15th to 21st June, and an adult at Nimmo's Pier, Galway, on the extraordinary date of 14th November into 1988. One of the best-ever years, and the Devon individual is the earliest on the Committee's files.

### **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* (50, 485, 12)

**Avon** Chew Valley Lake, adult, 1st September (A. D. Whatley *et al.*).

**Cumbria** Burgh-by-Sands, adult, 11th to 13th July (J. & J. Chapman).

**Derbyshire** Ogston Reservoir, juvenile, 5th September (M. F. Stoyale).

**Grampian** Meikle Loch, 23rd to 26th May (A. Webb *et al.*).

**Kent** Dungeness, 18th June (S. P. Clancy *et al.*). Minnis Bay, adult, 17th September (N. Hando, T. Hodge *et al.*).

**Lancashire** Leighton Moss, 1st June (D. Cavanagh *et al.*).

**Norfolk** Hickling, 10th May (A. Curry, D. J. Holman). Methwood Hythe, 13th June (R. E. Newham, A. R. J. Roe *et al.*).

**Sussex, East Rye**, 14th June (H. Taffs *et al.*).

**1985 Cambridgeshire** Ferry Meadows Country Park, two, 7th June (T. P. Daunt).

**1986 Dorset** Christchurch Harbour, 21st August (B. J. K. Caswell); same, Coward's Marsh, 21st to 28th (B. J. K. Caswell, A. Hayden, L. Pike *et al.*).

**1986 Somerset** Sutton Bingham Reservoir, juvenile, 12th August (M. A. Hallett, B. J. Mathews, B. J. Widden *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe, West and East Asia) One at Lough Arrow, Co. Sligo, on 31st May, and an adult at Lady's Island Lake, Co. Wexford, from 2nd to 21st August. A below-par year, especially for autumn juveniles, but at least some splendid summer adults to admire.

**Brünnich's Guillemot** *Uria lomvia* (2, 20, 2)

**Shetland** Off Hamnavoe, Burra, 3rd to 7th February (C. D. R. Heard *et al.*); another, freshly dead, 7th (D. Coutts *et al.*).

**1980 Shetland** Burrafirth, Unst, dead about two weeks, 24th February (M. Sinclair *et al.*).

(Circumpolar Arctic) With four records, 1980 has an unassailable lead, though only one was seen alive. Shetland has by no means the monopoly that might be expected, with only four previous records since 1958; the 1987 individual is only the third British record of a live one.

**Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* (6, 22, 0)

**1986 Wight, Isle of** Brighstone Bay, 26th May (*Brit. Birds* 80: 547), also 28th and was first-year (D. B. Wooldridge).

(South Europe, Southwest Asia and Africa).

**Yellow-billed Cuckoo** *Coccyzus americanus* (22, 26, 1)

**Devon** Lundy, first-winter, 16th October (Dr S. F. Tanner, N. Trout).

**1986 Devon** Lundy, first-winter, 31st October (P. A. T. Clabburn, N. A. Willcox).

(North America) A report from Lincolnshire remains under consideration. Lundy proves its worth again.

**Scops Owl** *Otus scops* (64, 16, 0)

**1985 Devon** Kenn, near Exeter, ♀, dead on road (*Brit. Birds* 80: 547), full date, 20th April.

**1986 Orkney** Sanday, 5th to 16th June (M. Gray, A. Saunders *et al.*).

(South Europe, Russia, West Asia and Northwest Africa) Now five records of this elusive bleeper in the 1980s, but no hint that it will ever regain its status as the regular visitor which it was in the early part of this century.

**Snowy Owl** *Nyctea scandiaca* (many, 91, 0)

**Shetland** Fetlar, two ♀♀ from 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 547) to 26th April, up to two discontinuously to 30th August, at least one to end of year. One or both of same, Unst, occasionally, 26th April to 1st October (per J. N. Dymond).

**1983 Shetland** Fetlar, four ♀♀ by 16th November to at least 10th February 1984, including one immature, probably second-winter (*Brit. Birds* 77: 538); the immature considered new to local stock (per J. N. Dymond).

**1984 Shetland** See 1983 above.

(Circumpolar Arctic) The Shetland totals have been reassessed by J. N. Dymond, hence the reduced total for 1958-86.

**Chimney Swift** *Chaetura pelagica* (0, 3, 1)

**Cornwall** Near Truro, 18th October (P. A. Maker)(plates 289-292).

(North America) Several species have appeared for the first time ever, only to be followed by a succession of subsequent records in a short time;



289-292. Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica*, Cornwall, October 1987 (P. A. Maker)

this species was not recorded until 1982, but it has now been seen in two autumns since.

**Alpine Swift** *Apus melba* (150, 229, 17)

**Cornwall** Tintagel, 21st September (J. C. Foster).

**Devon** Modbury, 18th to 19th April (S. J. Ellis, H. R. Harrop, R. G. Smith) (*Brit. Birds* 80: plate 190).

**Dorset** Portland, 28th April (H. W. Wallis); another, 5th May (G. Walbridge). Studland Heath, 1st May (I. M. & Mrs J. A. Lewis, S. J. Morrison); presumed same, Stanpit Marsh, 1st May (D. N. Smith), both presumed same as first Portland individual.

**Dyfed** Borth, 1st March (A. Gaunt *et al.*).

**Gwynedd** Bardsey, 1st September (R. D. Moore).

**Humberside** Spurn, 30th April (B. R. Spence); another, 9th May (R. Gilbert).

**Kent** Dungeness, 21st July (N. Odin). Whitstable, 14th October (M. J. & Mrs J. Pointon).

**Lincolnshire** Gibraltar Point, 24th April; presumed same, dead, Seacroft, 2nd May (A. J. Bellamy, M. Ellis, K. M. Wilson *et al.*).

**Norfolk** Cley, 18th April (C. J. Small); presumed same, Wiveton, 20th (P. Gooden).

**Northumberland** Holywell Dene, 13th to 14th September (R. Johnson *et al.*), presumed same as Tyne & Wear individual.

**Suffolk** Minsmere, 18th April (B. A. & C. A. Buttle, P. Sawyer) (fig. 4). Dunwich, 2nd May (A. Dixon).

**Sussex**, East Langney Point, 2nd May (D., J. F. & Mrs D. Cooper).

**Tyne & Wear** St Mary's Island, 13th September (R. Johnson *et al.*), same as Northumberland individual.

**1983 Humberside** Near Spurn, 24th September (A. C. & Mrs A. Hall).

**1986 Cambridgeshire** Cambridge, 29th May (P. M. Gazeley).

(South Eurasia, Northwest and East Africa) There was also one on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 23rd August. A belated record is of one over Wicklow town on 10th September 1978. The best-ever year for this powerful and impressive swift. April records are not unusual (though six

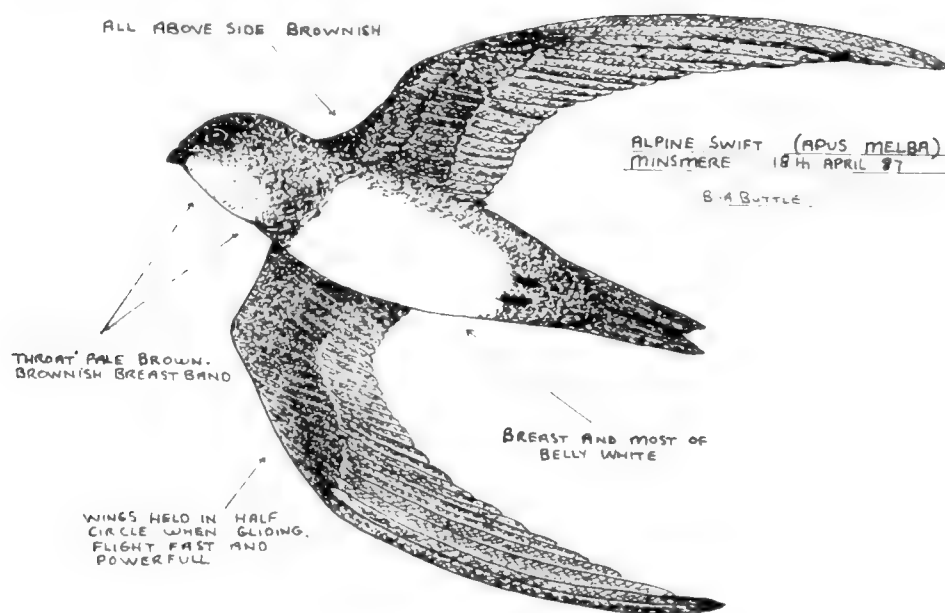


Fig. 4. Alpine Swift *Apus melba*, Suffolk, April 1987 (B. A. Buttle)

in April certainly is), and in 1967 there was one on 24th and 25th March, but the Dyfed individual was extraordinarily early.

### **Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* (154, 216, 26)

**Cornwall** Trevoze Head, five, 15th June (R. Mayer).

**Essex** Walton-on-the-Naze, two, 5th to 6th July (Dr S. Cox, Dr J. C. B. & Mrs A. E. Shutes). Paglesham, two juveniles, 26th to 31st August (G. Wright *et al.*).

**Humberside** Flamborough Head, 30th May (A. M. Allport, R. C. Hart, D. G. Hobson *et al.*).

**Kent** Walmer, six, 20th June (D. Hall, D. J. Howe, M. J. Pollard *et al.*). Foreness, 5th July (S. D. W. Mount).

**Lincolnshire** Gibraltar Point, three, 5th May (R. P. Mundy, A. Shaw, K. M. Wilson *et al.*).

**Suffolk** Benacre and Covehithe area, 14th June (J. Masters, D. R. Newton *et al.*).

**Sussex**, East Beachy Head, 25th May (D., J. F. & Mrs D. R. Cooper, A. Quinn *et al.*).

**Yorkshire**, North Pickering, four adults, 27th to 29th August (M. & Mrs A. Brewer *et al.*).

(South Europe, Southwest Asia and Northwest Africa) Also a belated record of three at Forest, Guernsey, Channel Islands, on 25th June 1986. There were two at Fort Hounnet, Guernsey, on 17th April, and three at Vale, Guernsey, on 29th June. Small parties are not unusual.

### **Roller** *Coracias garrulus* (135, 76, 1)

**Hampshire** Furzybrow, Pennymoor and Rowbarrow Pond, New Forest, at least 30th May (M. J. W. Hay, K. W. Maycock, R. J. Senior *et al.*).

(South and East Europe, West Asia and Northwest Africa) A record from Gwent is under consideration, after details became lost in the post. Hampshire has previously been conspicuously absent from this species' entry in these reports. Most individuals in Britain stay a few days, but rarely do more than three or four arrive in any year.

### **Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* (40, 266, 12)

**Berkshire** Slough Sewage-farm, 2nd to at least 16th January (C. D. R. Heard *et al.*).

**Cornwall** Reskajeage, 8th to 10th November (D. S. Flumm, A. R. Pay *et al.*).

**Dorset** Portland, 19th September (G. Walbridge *et al.*).

**Kent** Foreness, 28th to 29th May (M. H. Davies, D. C. Gilbert, F. Solly).

**Orkney** North Ronaldsay, 2nd to 3rd May (M. G. Pennington, Dr K. F. Woodbridge).

**Scilly** St Mary's, 3rd to 4th May (P. H. Aley *et al.*); 21st to 31st October (R. A. Schofield *et al.*). Bryher, 7th May (G. R. Avery, J. W. Hale, J. D. Sanders). St Agnes, 14th October (A. P. Goddard, C. R. Wills *et al.*).

**Shetland** Fair Isle, 29th May (S. J. Aspinall). Scatness, 28th September (Dr C. F. Mackenzie). Grutness, 6th October (J. D. Okill *et al.*).

(South Eurasia and North Africa) An average year; the January and November records recall one in Devon in December 1985, and there have been eight November arrivals (and several hangers-on from October) since 1958; nevertheless, the Berkshire record is unprecedented.

### Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* (7, 88, 40)

**Cornwall** Kenidjack, 27th October (A. Birch *et al.*) (fig. 5). Rame Head, 28th October (L. A. C. Truscott). Zennor, 5th November (D. S. Flumm). Marazion, three, 5th to 7th November (M. P. Semmens *et al.*).

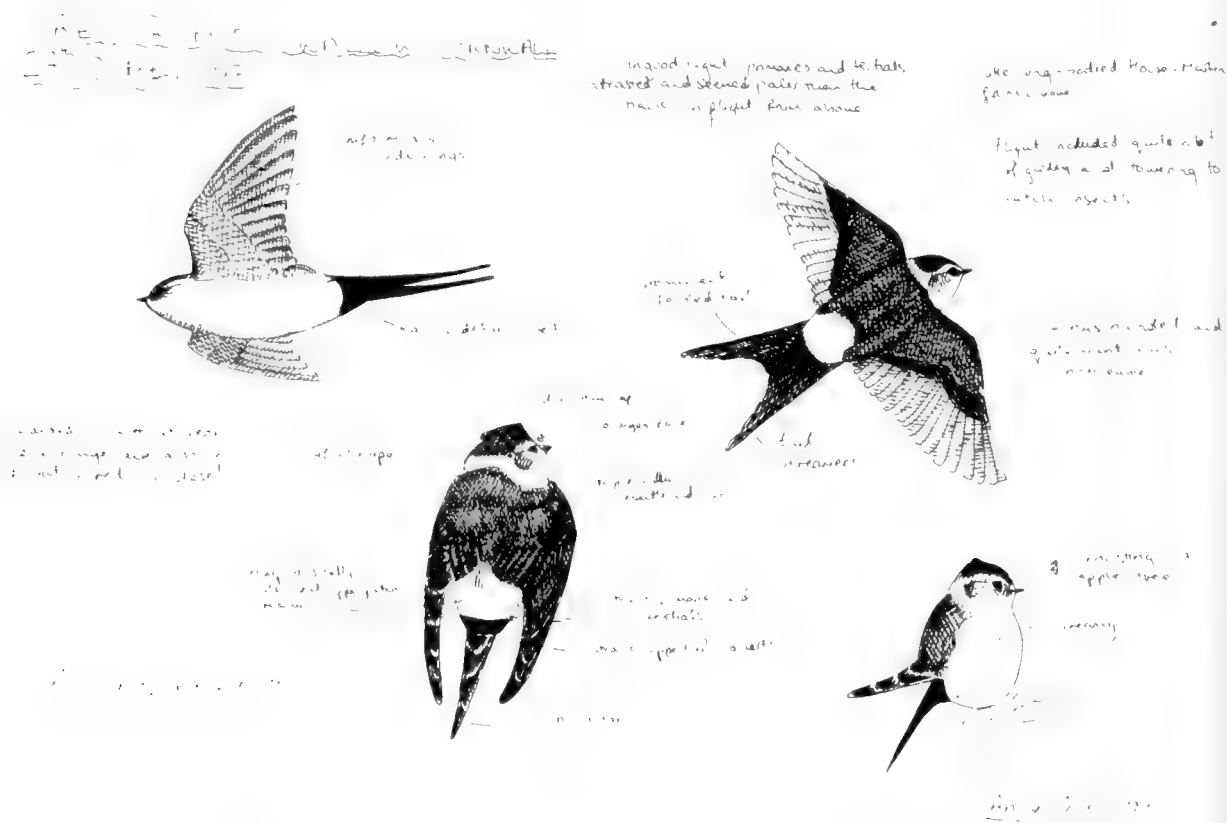


Fig. 5. Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*, Cornwall, October 1987 (Andy Birch)

**Devon** Lundy, 24th October (P. H. Aley, B. R. Field, B. & L. Tollitt *et al.*).

**Dorset** Stanpit Marsh, 1st to 2nd May, two, 2nd (J. Firth, M. J. Gibbons, P. Lord *et al.*).

**Hertfordshire** Amwell, 15th April (B. Reed, G. J. White).

**Humberside** Flamborough Head, 5th to 8th November (P. A. Lassey *et al.*).

**Kent** Reculver, 22nd October (T. Hodge, C. A. Osborne *et al.*).

**Lincolnshire** Gibraltar Point, 2nd to 5th May (I. E. Eyre, G. E. Redgewell, K. M. Wilson *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 80: plates 217 & 218; 81: plates 299 & 300).

**Lothian** Cammo Park, Edinburgh, three, 6th November (K. Heron).

**Norfolk** Cley and Wiveton, 8th to 12th April (E. T. Myers *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 80: plates 183-185). Winterton, three, 12th November (B. W. Jarvis).

**Scilly** At least seven: Bryher, four, 19th October, three of same, 23rd (G. J. Etherington *et al.*). Treco, three of same, 20th to 21st (per M. J. Rogers). St Mary's, one, 21st, at least five, 23rd, one, 24th, seven together, 27th, two, 28th (A. H. Davies, C. J. Mackenzie-Grieve, D. J. Odell, M. J. Palmer, K. E. Vinicombe *et al.* per M. J. Rogers) (plate 53). St Martin's, 23rd October (D. M. & Mrs L. F. C. Love *et al.*); 28th (per M. J. Rogers). Gugh, 23rd, 24th (M. J. Palmer *et al.*), presumed one of same, St Agnes, 23rd (P. G. Lansdown *et al.* per M. J. Rogers).





293. Female Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus*, Strathclyde, October 1987 (Gordon Langsbury)

294. Male King Eider *Somateria spectabilis*, Grampian, June 1987 (Steve Young)





295. Adult Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus*, Grampian, June 1987 (Roy Ingleston)

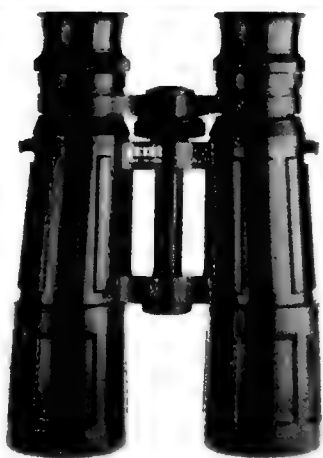
296. Male Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*, Scilly, April 1987 (Keith Warrington)



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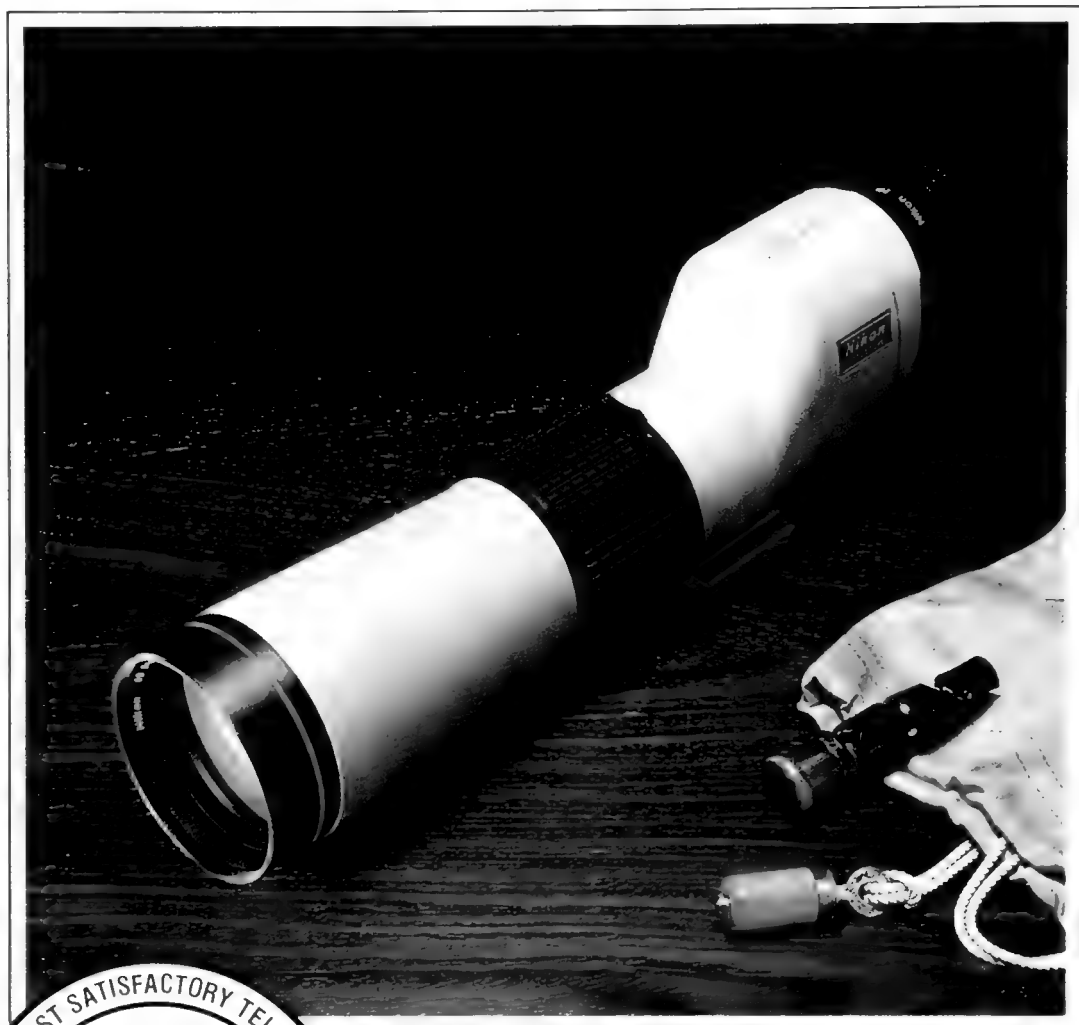


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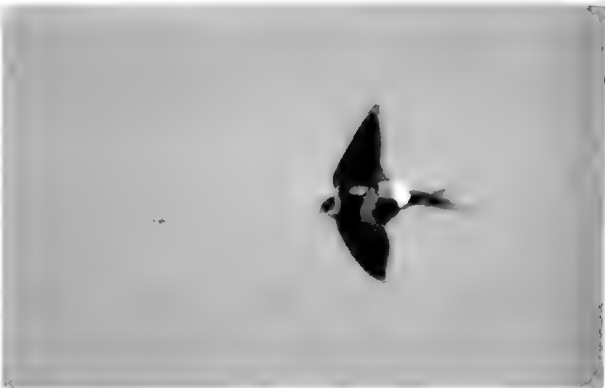
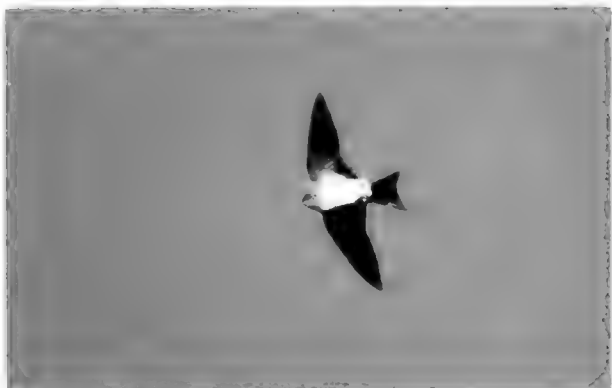


297. Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*, Humberside, September 1987 (A. S. Butler)

298. Male Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*, Suffolk, October 1987 (D. A. Dorling)







299 & 300. Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*, Lincolnshire, May 1987 (Keith Atkin)



301. Wilson's Warbler *Wilsonia pusilla*, Cornwall, October 1985 (K. Pellow)

302. Female Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*, Co. Cork, October 1987 (A. McGeehan)



**Shetland** Fair Isle, 24th October (S. J. Aspinall). Clickimin Loch, Lerwick, 31st October (M. Holmes *et al.*); Lerwick, two, 3rd to 8th November (D. Coutts, I. Sandison *et al.*), probably including Clickimin Loch individual.

**Somerset** Porlock Marsh, 29th October (J. L. F. Parslow).

**Suffolk** Eastbridge, 21st April (J. Keep, A. Mullins). Benacre, 14th November (W. Stone).

**Sussex, East** Pett Level, 17th April (A. J. Stones). Beachy Head, 12th to 17th May (G. W. Gowlett, D. J. Standing *et al.*). Rye, 26th May (A. D., S. & Mrs S. Brown).

**Tayside** Broughty Ferry, 7th to 8th November (R. D. Goater, S. Green *et al.*).

(South and East Eurasia and Africa) In Ireland, singles at the Old Head of Kinsale, Co. Cork, on 26th April, Loop Head, Co. Clare, on 7th November, and at Hook Head, Co. Wexford, on 8th November. One at Fort le Crocq, Guernsey, on 6th May, the first for the Channel Islands. A number of other reports remain to be evaluated, but the late-autumn influx is clearly astonishing. In fact, 11 in spring would themselves make the best year since 1980 (and better than any other year) and should not be overlooked. The scale and spread of the October-November flood is extraordinary and was quite unpredictable, though the lateness of the dates is not, in itself, unusual for this species.

### **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* (1, 39, 20)

**Hampshire** Sway, at least 13th to 18th November, trapped 15th, 18th (S. H. Sporne, E. J. Wiseman).

**Humberside** Spurn, 5th October (G. J. Speight *et al.*).

**Norfolk** Blakeney Point, 2nd October (D. Abdulla, S. J. M. Gantlett). Sheringham, 7th November (R. A. J. Forsyth, R. W. Saunders).

**Orkney** North Ronaldsay, 5th to 6th October, trapped 5th (A. Bielinski, M. G. Pennington, Dr K. F. Woodbridge *et al.*); 30th October to 6th November, trapped 30th, 2nd (Miss A. E. Duncan, M. G. Pennington *et al.*).

**Scilly** St Martin's, 20th to 21st October (A. J. L. Smith, J. Williamson *et al.*). St Mary's, possibly same, 23rd to 24th (A. J. L. Smith, W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

**Shetland** Fair Isle, at least eight, possibly eleven: 2nd to 20th October (P. H. Alex, S. J. Aspinall, S. J. Cox *et al.*); 14th to 20th (S. J. Aspinall, K. Osborn *et al.*); another three, 15th (R. J. & S. J. Aspinall, K. Bowey, C. Donald *et al.*); at least five to at least 20th, possibly to 21st, two to 22nd, probably one of same to 23rd (J. N. Dymond, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); another, 22nd (S. J. Aspinall); another, 28th October to 1st November (K. Osborn *et al.*); another, 30th to 31st October (S. J. Aspinall *et al.*). Sumburgh, 3rd October (J. N. Dymond). Grutness, 29th September to 1st October (Dr C. F. Mackenzie).

**Sussex, East** Beachy Head, 11th October (R. H. & Mrs M. E. Charlwood).

**Yorkshire, North** Filey, 22nd October (D. J. Scanlan, H. J. Whitehead).

**1986 Tyne & Wear** St Mary's Island, 13th October (M. P. Frankis).

(Northeast Russia to Central and East Asia) Totally eclipsing the previous best year of 1984, when there were seven; Fair Isle and Scilly have been the classic places and, other than in Norfolk, mainland English records are still exceptional.

### **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* (30, 160, 9)

**Dorset** Hengistbury Head, 25th May (D. N. Smith).

**Humberside** Kilnsea, 10th May (N. A. Bell *et al.*). Spurn, 4th October (B. Fendley, K. & M. K. Rotherham, A. Wrightson).

**Kent** St Margaret's, 4th October (I. P. Hodgson *et al.*).

**Northumberland** Druridge Pool, 10th to 11th May (M. G. Anderson, M. Hepple, M. S. Hodgson *et al.*). Holy Island, 10th May (K. W. Regan, N. J. Watmough); another, 17th (J. E. Wilson, Miss C. Woodward).

**Shetland** Fair Isle, 28th August (S. J. Aspinall *et al.*).

**1985 Scilly** St Mary's, 13th October (J. Gregory, S. J. Ling, P. Wheeler *et al.*).

(Arctic Eurasia) Also one at Garretstown, Co. Cork, on 15th May. Back to a more typical year after a bad one in 1986.

**Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* (2, 41, 1)

**Shetland** Fair Isle, first-winter, 1st to 2nd September (S. J. Aspinall *et al.*).

**1986 Scilly** St Mary's, juvenile or first-winter, 31st August to 4th September (M. J. Palmer, R. J. Wilkinson, J. A. Wolstencroft *et al.*).

(Northeast and East Russia, West Siberia, West and Central Asia) Two further reports are still being considered. The year 1986 becomes the record, with four.

**Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia* (2, 69, 2)

**Humberside** Spurn, in song, 23rd to 25th May, trapped 23rd (J. Cudworth *et al.*).

**Norfolk** Holkham Meals, in song, 24th May (P. Clement *et al.*).

**1984 Cambridgeshire** Welches Dam, in song, 2nd to 3rd June (R. E. Green, G. J. M. Hirons).

**1985 Shetland** Bressay, adult, trapped, 16th August (D. Gilbert, C. R. McKay). Noss, first-winter, 20th August (C. R. McKay).

(Scandinavia, East Europe and West Asia) Rather on the low side, but for them to be singing is not unusual.

**Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata* (1, 95, 18)

Individuals showing the characters of one or another of the eastern races *S. t. maura* or *stejnegeri* were recorded as follows:

**Dorset** Portland, ♀ or immature, 3rd to 4th October (G. Walbridge *et al.*).

**Essex** Hanningfield Reservoir, first-winter ♀, since 6th December 1986 to 10th January (*Brit. Birds* 80: 551).

**Fife** Balcomie, near Fife Ness, ♀ or immature, 3rd October (J. S. Nadin, J. G. Steele).

**Humberside** Flamborough Head, ♂, trapped, 15th October (J. C. Lamplough, P. A. Lassey *et al.*).

**Lincolnshire** Donna Nook, ♀ or immature, 2nd October (G. P. Catley, D. Hursthouse).

**Scilly** St Mary's, ♀ or immature, 29th September to 1st October (P. Bagguley, D. S. H. Coates *et al.*). Tresco, ♀ or immature, 3rd November (W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

**Shetland** Quendale, ♀ or immature, 27th September, possibly since 26th (A. F. T. & G. J. Fitchett *et al.*). Fair Isle, ♂, trapped, four ♀♀ or immatures, 29th September, two to 30th (S. J. Aspinall, R. Proctor, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); ♀ or immature, 4th October (D. R. Bird *et al.*); ♀♀ or immatures, two, 29th October, one to 1st November (S. J. Aspinall, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*). Bridge of Walls, ♀ or immature, 2nd to 6th October (C. Moar).

**Wiltshire** Chirton Down, ♀, 21st November to 7th February 1988 (Miss L. H. Cady, P. E. Castle, R. Turner *et al.*).

**Yorkshire, North** Staveley, ♀ or immature, 4th to 10th October (R. Evison, G. T. Foggitt, P. T. Treloar).

**1986 Humberside** Paull, ♀ or immature, 5th October (S. M. Lister).

(White Sea, eastwards across Siberia, East Caucasus and Northern Iran) A new peak for these attractive, pale and variegated little chats, due largely to the Fair Isle series.

**Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* (3, 10, 1)

**Kent** Foreness, ♂, age uncertain, 7th November (M. H. Davies, S. D. W. Mount, F. Solly *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe and South-central Asia) A typically late record of this great rarity.

**Black-eared Wheatear** *Oenanthe hispanica* (15, 23, 5)

**Cornwall** Hill Tor, Bodmin Moor, first-summer ♂, showing characters of *O. h. hispanica*, 12th to 13th June (B. A. Mason *et al.*)(*Brit. Birds* 80: plate 252).

**Hampshire** Farlington Marshes, ♂, 5th June (G. Farwell).

**Sussex**, East Beachy Head, ♀, 31st May (R. H. & Mrs M. E. Charlwood).

(Southern Europe, Northwest Africa and Southwest Asia) A record from Great Blasket, Co. Kerry, on 14th August 1973 is now considered unacceptable by the Irish Rare Birds Committee. There was a first-summer male at Great Saltee, Co. Wexford, from 7th to 10th May, and a male at Newcastle, Co. Wicklow, from 17th to 24th September. The best year since 1974 and 1975, which each had three; this is still a considerable rarity, and females and immatures seem still to be difficult to prove.

**Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* (11, 13, 2)

**Devon** East Prawle, ♂, 26th to 30th October (R. C. E. & Mrs S. M. Titman *et al.*)(plate 55), see Suffolk below.

**Essex** The Naze, ♀, 12th October (P. M. Griggs, A. J. Long, C. M. Poole *et al.*)(plate 59).

**Suffolk** Landguard, ♂, 20th to 24th October, trapped 23rd (M. D. Crewe *et al.*)(plate 298), later in Devon (see above).

(North Africa, Northwest Arabia, east to Mongolia) It seems that we now need to read ring numbers in the field to keep up with travelling rarities. Recent records have tended to be even later in autumn/winter or early spring.

**Hermit Thrush** *Catharus guttatus* (0, 2, 1)

**Scilly** St Agnes, 15th to 16th October (S. Howat, R. McCann, T. M. Melling *et al.*).

(North America) The third record, after one on Fair Isle in June 1975 and one in Scilly in October 1984.

**Swainson's Thrush** *Catharus ustulatus* (1, 9, 2)

**Devon** Lundy, 15th to 31st October, trapped 15th (A. Gosler, B. & L. Tollitt *et al.*).

**Scilly** St Mary's, 12th to 13th October (B. G. Brown, Mrs A. Dixon, A. Hannington *et al.*).

(North America) All previous arrivals in Britain have fallen between 14th and 27th October, except for one end-of-September record in 1984; the first British and Irish record was in May 1956.

**Gray-cheeked Thrush** *Catharus minimus* (1, 31, 0)

**1986 Devon** Lundy, 26th October to 2nd November (P. A. T. Clabburn, A. M. Taylor *et al.*).

**1986 Scilly** St Agnes, 24th October (P. G. Lansdown, R. McCann). St Mary's, 27th October to 16th November (*Brit. Birds* 80: 558), probably same, different locality, 26th (J. M. Clark, A. le F. Dobson, I. Lewington *et al.*).

(North America and Northern Siberia) This takes the number of individuals in 1986 to at least 12.

**Veery** *Catharus fuscescens* (0, 1, 1)

**Devon** Lundy, 10th October to 11th November, trapped 10th and 20th October (J. Blakey, J. M. B. King, B. & L. Tollitt *et al.*)(plate 303).

(North America) The first record for Europe was in Cornwall in October 1970; this is the first in Britain since then, and continues to show the quality of Lundy as a Nearctic-vagrant hunting-ground.



303. Veery *Catharus fuscescens* (left) and Redwing *Turdus iliacus* (right), Devon, October 1987 (B. Tollitt)

**Eye-browed Thrush** *Turdus obscurus* (0, 8, 3)

Scilly St Mary's, first-winter, 12th October (J. M. Cawston, S. M. Dean, J. Frost *et al.*). St Agnes, first-winter, 27th October (K. D. Shaw *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, 7th to 15th October, trapped 7th (K. Osborn, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

(Siberia and Eastern Asia) One of the best trios of a stunning autumn; the first records were in 1964, when there were also three. Four of the previous records were in October, the others, surprisingly, in April, May, September and December.

**Black-throated Thrush** *Turdus ruficollis* (3, 11, 3)

Scilly St Mary's, ♂, 23rd to 24th October (R. P. Bowman *et al.*).

Shetland Bigton, Mainland, ♂, 30th October (D. R. Bird *et al.*).

Yorkshire, South Sheffield Botanical Gardens, first-winter, 9th, 19th to 20th January (P. A. Ardron, K. R. Gould, S. J. Roddis)(plate 304).

(Central Asia) October and midwinter records are typical, but three in a year is the best total yet.

**Lanceolated Warbler** *Locustella lanceolata* (9, 28, 4)

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, trapped, 19th September (P. Milford, K. Osborn, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 20th September (P. Milford, N. J. Riddiford, W. Underwood *et al.*); first-winter, trapped, 26th September (H. Joliffe, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*). Scatness, 17th September (D. R. Bird, P. M. Ellis, P. V. Harvey *et al.*).

(East Eurasia from Central Russia to North Japan) Mainland Shetland at last has its first record. These little groups of reports continue in typical fashion.

**Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* (2, 11, 1)

**Shetland** Fair Isle, trapped, 22nd September (S. J. M. Gantlett, B. Ram, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

(South Russia and Asia) Mid September to late October is the classic period, with single British arrivals in May and November, and an Irish one in December.

**Blyth's Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (9, 4, 2)

**Shetland** Fair Isle, first-winter, 27th to 29th September, trapped 27th, probably present since 26th or earlier (S. J. Aspinall, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

**Tyne & Wear** Prior's Park, first-winter, trapped 20th October, released 21st (M. P. Carruthers, L. Hall *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe, across Asia to Lake Baykal) A record of one trapped was received late, and sight records from Kent and, from 1984, Norfolk remain to be considered. The much-argued-about bird in Cambridgeshire also remains to be assessed by the Committee; many people think that Blyth would have done better to have ignored this species (but then we would have been left with his equally exasperating pipit). Previous reports have mentioned that identification problems have obscured the true status of the species here, but that the clouds are blowing away. It is sobering to think that six or seven were recorded on Fair Isle between 1910 and 1928, a little before Svensson's *Identification Guide to European Passerines*.

**Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (23, 119, 3)

**Humberside** Blacktoft Sands, in song, 13th May (T. A. Ede, A. Grieve, C. C. Straw *et al.*).

**Orkney** Papa Westray, 29th April (I. P. Robinson *et al.*).

**Shetland** Dale, Lerwick, 13th to 27th June (D. Coutts, A. Nicol *et al.*).

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304. First-winter Black-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis*, South Yorkshire, January 1987 (K. R. Gould)



**1980 Sussex, East** Locality withheld, ♂, 15th August (K. M. Johnston).

(Europe, Southwest and East Asia and North Africa) An average showing.

**Booted Warbler** *Hippolais caligata* (1, 21, 4)

**Dorset** Portland, trapped, 13th September (G. J. Hinchon, P. Howlett, L. P. Mulford *et al.*)(plates 15 & 16).

**Kent** Dungeness, 4th to 5th September, trapped 4th (P. Boxall, S. McMinn, N. Odin *et al.*).

**Scilly** St Mary's, 18th to 21st October (I. Lycett, A. S. Vials, P. J. Willoughby *et al.*). St Agnes, 23rd October (B. A. & Mrs K. Barnacle, M. Hepple, T. M. Melling *et al.*), presumed same, 27th (M. P. Eccles, R. A. Schofield, K. D. Shaw *et al.*).

(Northwest Russia, east to Mongolia and south to Iran) A year matched only by 1981 for this five-star rarity.

**Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* (12, 158, 20)

**Cornwall** Kenidjack, ♂, 18th to 20th April (I. Prophet, V. R. Tucker *et al.*). The Lizard, ♂, 27th April (A. R. Pay).

**Devon** Near Start Point, ♂, 21st April (J. Mitchell). Lundy, ♂, 9th August to 5th September, trapped 17th August (R. Bower, R. A. Duncan *et al.*).

**Dorset** Portland, first-summer ♂, trapped, 21st May (Mrs S. Coe, P. Howlett, M. & Mrs W. Rogers). Verne Common, ♂, 20th to 29th May (P. Callaway, C. E. Richards, B. Small *et al.*).

**Grampian** Rattray Head, ♀ or first-year ♂, 28th May (G. M. Cresswell).

**Gwynedd** Bardsey, first-winter, 21st to 24th August, trapped 21st (S. W. Anderson, T. Collins *et al.*).

**Humberside** Grimston, ♂, trapped, 25th May (S. G. Wilson).

**Kent** New Romney, ♂, 18th April (B. Banson, A. G. White *et al.*).

**Lothian** Tynninghame, first-winter ♂, 1st October (G. J. Clark).

**Northumberland** Holywell Dene, ♂, 9th May (J. Swalwell).

**Scilly** St Mary's, ♂, 23rd to 25th April (Miss R. Lewis, H. P. K. Robinson, W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*). St Agnes, ♀, 2nd to 10th October (P. A. Dukes *et al.*)(plates 57 & 305).



305. Female Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*, Scilly, October 1987 (Andrew Moon)

**Shetland** Fair Isle, ♂, 28th April (S. J. Aspinall *et al.*); ♂, 29th May (S. J. Aspinall *et al.*). Cunningsburgh, ♂, 21st July (P. M. Ellis, J. Nicolson *et al.*). Whalsay, ♂, 31st July to 1st August (D. R. Bird, A. Sandison, D. Suddaby).

**Western Isles** Castle Bay, Barra, ♂, 19th May (J. S. Austin, K. Huxley, S. H. Robson *et al.*).

**1986 Bedfordshire** Whipsnade, ♂, 7th May (W. J. Drayton).



**1986 Durham** See 1986 Tyne & Wear below.

**1986 Shetland** Bigton, ♂, 24th May to 2nd June, trapped 24th (J. Morton, J. Murphy *et al.*). Dunrossness, first-winter ♂, 23rd September (*Brit. Birds* 80: 560), also 24th.

**1986 Tyne & Wear** Finchale Abbey, ♂, 11th May (*Brit. Birds* 80: 560), locality is Finchale Priory in Co. Durham.

(South Europe, West Turkey, Northwest Africa) Also one on Great Saltee, Co. Wexford, on 20th May. The increase continues; generally earlier in spring than in 1986.

**Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* (1, 13, 0)

(South Europe, Middle East and North Africa) One on Guernsey, Channel Islands, on 17th October.

**Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* (13, 127, 19)

**Borders** St Abb's Head, 29th August (I. J. Andrews, M. Griffin, D. Thorne).

**Cleveland** Boulby Cliffs, first-winter, 27th to 31st August, trapped 29th (I. Boustead, N. Jackson *et al.*).

**Humberside** Flamborough Head, 29th to 30th August (A. S. Butler, R. C. Hart, V. A. Lister *et al.*).

**Norfolk** Holkham Meads, 25th to 28th August (G. Allport, A. Long *et al.*). Blakeney Point, 25th to 30th August (R. Aberdein, S. J. M. Gantlett *et al.*). Waxham, 26th to 27th August, two, 26th (G. J. Etherington *et al.*). Paston, 28th August (M. Fiszer). Stiffkey, 28th August (A. Long, C. Poole, R. Thomas *et al.*).

**Shetland** Fair Isle, 26th to 27th June (S. J. Aspinall, K. Osborn, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); first-winter, 24th to 25th August, trapped 24th (N. J. Riddiford, A. D. Warren and members of YOC Group *et al.*). Bigton, first-winter, trapped, 13th August (J. N. Dymond *et al.*); first-winter, 13th to 17th, trapped 13th (P. V. Harvey, J. D. Okill, D. Suddaby *et al.*). Foula, first-winter, trapped, 15th August (J. N. Dymond, J. D. Okill, M. A. Peacock *et al.*). Fetlar, first-winter, trapped, 19th August (M. A. Peacock). Catfirth, first-winter, trapped, 9th September (A. Graham, J. D. Okill *et al.*).

**Strathclyde** Sanda Island, South Kintyre, first-winter, trapped, 31st July (W. Ellrick, I. Livingstone, J. Morton *et al.*).

**Yorkshire, North** Filey, first-winter, 24th to 28th August, trapped 27th (P. J. Dunn *et al.*); another, 28th (P. J. Dunn, A. Stonier *et al.*).

**1983 Highland** Aberfeldy, in song, 21st May to 25th June (*Brit. Birds* 78: 576; 79: 493; 80: 561), locality is in Tayside.

**1983 Tayside** See 1983 Highland above.

**1984 Lincolnshire** Gibraltar Point, first-winter, trapped, 22nd September (R. Lambert, B. Wetton).

**1986 Shetland** Out Skerries, 15th to 16th August (E. Tait).

(Eurasia, east from Northern Germany) An Irish record, previously accepted as Arctic, now as Greenish, is of one on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 29th August 1961. Comfortably the best-ever year, with a classic August peak; the Strathclyde individual was, however, exceptionally early.

**Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis* (19, 133, 3)

**Orkney** North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 20th September (R. J. Safford, B. C. Sheldon *et al.*).

**Shetland** Fair Isle, 12th September (A. Illingworth, J. Regan, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*). Norwick, Unst, 10th September (G. Petrie, I. Sandison).

**1978 Norfolk** Blakeney Point, 8th September (N. Bostock, E. T. Myers *et al.*).

**1985 Highland** Wick, Caithness, 30th September to 2nd October (K. W. Banks, S. G. Mackay).

(Northern Fenno-Scandia, east to Alaska) Irish records rejected after a review by the Irish Rare Birds Committee include those on Cape Clear

Island, Co. Cork, on 29th August 1961 (accepted as Greenish) and on 27th September 1976. A belated record accepted is of one on Loop Head, Co. Clare, on 6th September 1986. A below-average year, but very typical pattern.

**Pallas's Warbler** *Phylloscopus proregulus* (3, 354, 37)

**Cornwall** The Lizard, 31st October (B. Cave). Porthgwarra, 31st October to 1st November (C. C. Barnard, L. P. Williams).

**Dorset** Portland, 20th October (G. Walbridge *et al.*); 31st October to 1st November, two, 31st (D. & G. Walbridge *et al.*).

**Essex** Holland Haven, 28th October (G. C. Bond, L. Steward *et al.*); 24th November (P. Whiteman). Holliwell Point, two, 1st November (A. Beardwell, A. Cook, J. Torino).

**Gwynedd** Bardsey, 7th to 8th November, trapped 7th (T. Collins *et al.*).

**Humberside** Spurn, ♀, trapped, 17th October (J. K. Baker *et al.*); ♀, 29th to 30th, trapped 29th (N. A. Bell, J. Cudworth *et al.*).

**Kent** Sandwich Bay, two, one trapped, 20th October (D. M. Batchelor, A. Sapsford *et al.*). Dungeness, 28th October (D. A. Coleman, N. Odin); 31st (N. R. Davies); first-winter, 5th to 9th November, trapped 6th (N. Odin *et al.*). Foreness, 5th November (M. H. Davies *et al.*).

**Norfolk** Holkham Meads, 21st to 22nd October (A. I. Bloomfield, J. R. McCallum); 24th to 29th November, two, 24th (J. B. Kemp *et al.*). Cley, 29th October (P. & D. Lambert, D. J. & Z. C. Pearson *et al.*). Blakeney Point, 4th to 5th November (R. Fowling *et al.*). Paston, 6th November (J. R. Appleton). Waxham, 6th to 7th November (B. A. & C. A. Buttle). Lodge Marsh, Wells, 8th November (J. R. McCallum).

**Scilly** St Mary's, 1st to 2nd November (C. D. R. Heard *et al.*).

**Shetland** Fair Isle, 20th October (J. N. Dymond); three, one trapped, 30th (J. R. Allan, S. J. Aspinall, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

**Shropshire** Pelwall, trapped, 18th November (G. Austin, J. Langford).

**Suffolk** Landguard, 31st October (C. Lamsdell).

**Wight, Isle of St Catherine's Point**, 22nd to 23rd October (R. P. Attrill *et al.*).

**Yorkshire, North** Filey, 30th October (P. M. Scanlan *et al.*); another, 31st (J. E. Turner); another, 7th to 8th November (J. E. Turner *et al.*)(fig. 6).

PROMINENT PALE GREENISH CROWN-STRIPE

BLACKISH GYESTRIPE

PALE, YELLOW BRIDGE OVER BILL

FORMED BY MERGING SUPERCILIA

TWO CREAM WING BARS, LOWER

MORE PROMINENT + CURVED ROUND

WING



LONG, BROAD CREAM SUPERCILIA, YELLOW AT BASE

WELL DEMARKATED PALE, LIME UPPER RUMP PATCH

BROAD, CREAM TERTIAL FEATHERS

BRIGHTER GREEN EDGES TO TAIL + FLIGHT FEATHERS. NO WHITE IN TAIL OR WING PANEL

Fig. 6. Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*, North Yorkshire, November 1987 (Jane E. Turner)

**1986 Dorset** Hengistbury Head, 7th to 11th November (S. Davey *et al.*).

**1986 Sussex, West** Climping, 11th November (*Brit. Birds* 80: 562), also 15th November, 7th December (P. A. Rolph).

**1986 Wight, Isle of St Catherine's Point**, 15th November (S. Smith, K. Turner).

(Central, East and Southern Asia) Also one at Galley Head, Co. Cork, on 7th and 8th November. Still a star attraction, despite its upsurge earlier this decade; this is the best year since the vast influx of 1982. A number of records (notably from Suffolk) remain to be assessed. In 1982, the main arrival (of a staggering annual total of 126) was in mid October, and, in the first 'big year' of 1968, late October was the prime time. The year 1986 showed signs of a return to the earlier end-of-October/early-November peak period, and 1987 increased that trend. The year 1987 saw a large influx in Denmark (at least 15) and the highest annual total (42) in Sweden (*Brit. Birds* 81: 337).

**Radde's Warbler** *Phylloscopus schwarzi* (1, 50, 10)

**Gwynedd** Bardsey, 29th October (T. Collins, C. Felton, G. McLardy).

**Humberside** Spurn, 1st to 4th October, trapped 1st, 4th (J. Cudworth, A. J. Gramauskas, T. Robinson *et al.*); 5th to 11th, trapped 11th (J. Cudworth, J. E. Dale, G. J. Speight *et al.*).

**Kent** Dungeness, first-winter, 20th to 21st October, trapped 20th (S. McMinn *et al.*).

**Norfolk** Holkham Meads, 2nd October (G. D. Elliot, M. J. Everett, K. Morton).

**Scilly** St Mary's, 16th to 18th October (D. M. Harris, B. E. Wright *et al.*); 20th October (P. Bristow, M. Fiszer *et al.*).

**Shetland** Fair Isle, first-winter, trapped, 2nd October (A. Banwell, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*). Scatness, 3rd October (P. D. Dean, J. N. Dymond, Dr C. F. Mackenzie *et al.*).

**Yorkshire**, North Filey, 20th to 21st October, trapped 21st (S. Cochrane, H. J. Whitehead *et al.*).

(Central and East Asia) The best annual total other than the record dozen in 1982.

**Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (1, 50, 13)

**Essex** The Naze, 22nd October (C. J. Mackenzie-Grieve *et al.*).

**Gwynedd** Bardsey, first-winter ♂, trapped, 7th November (T. Collins, P. Jenks).

**Kent** Reculver, 19th to 23rd October (Dr A. M. Hanby, C. Hindle *et al.*). Sandwich Bay, trapped, 25th October (J. Frazer, J. N. Hollyer *et al.*). Minnis Bay, 31st October to 2nd November (Dr A. M. Hanby, J. Young *et al.*). Dungeness, 31st October to 2nd November, trapped 31st (B. Banson, J. R. H. Clements, S. McMinn *et al.*).

**Norfolk** Blakeney Point, 3rd to 4th October, trapped 4th (D. Atkinson, S. J. M. Gantlett, P. Hobson *et al.*). Happisburgh, 7th to 11th November (M. S. Cavanagh, M. I. Eldridge, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*).

**Shetland** Fair Isle, first-winter, trapped, 14th October (J. R. Allan, J. N. Dymond, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 6th November (S. J. Aspinall, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*). Dale of Walls, 30th October (Dr C. F. Mackenzie).

(Central and Northeast to Southern Asia) In Ireland, one at the Old Head of Kinsale, Co. Cork, on 31st October and 1st November and one on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 1st November. Easily the best year yet, continuing the extraordinary reflection of the pattern of Radde's Warblers.

**Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* (3, 92, 2)

**Kent** St Margaret's, 28th April (I. P. Hodgson).

**Scilly** St Mary's, 30th September (J. G. T. Hamilton, K. R. Lloyd *et al.*); presumed same, 8th to 10th October, identified as first-winter with call-note resembling that of eastern race *P. b. orientalis* (C. Fentiman, M. Reid, M. T. Wilson *et al.*).

**1986 Scilly** St Agnes, 1st September (V. A. Stratton).

(Central, West and South Europe, Levant and Northwest Africa) In the 1972 report, it was noted that only two of 13 records in three years were in

late autumn, and one of those, at least, was of the eastern race *orientalis* (at Spurn on 15th October 1970). Perhaps the split between early southern birds and late eastern ones is typical.

**Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* (2, 14, 0)

**1986 Shetland** Fair Isle, first-winter, trapped, 8th October (A. J. Livett, M. G. Pennington, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

(Central and Southeast Europe and West Russia) The May 1985 record from Norfolk remains under consideration. This is the first autumn record since 1962.

**Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus* (0, 12, 5)

**Norfolk** Hickling, in song, 4th to 10th April (D. J. Hewitt, R. Rowe *et al.*).

**Sussex, East** Pett Level, adult, 4th October (Mrs J. V. Bale, Mrs J. M. Butt *et al.*). Near St Leonard's, two adults, one first-winter, 26th to 27th October (observers' names withheld).

**1986 Merseyside** Moreton, immature, 14th September (J. G. Jones).

(Western Europe to Manchuria) With the late 1986 acceptance, this species has made an almost annual appearance in this report since 1980 (there was none in 1985), although in two years the birds were simply hanging on from a previous arrival.

**Brown Shrike** *Lanius cristatus* (0, 1, 0)

**1985 Shetland** Sumburgh, adult, 30th September to 2nd October (M. S. Chapman, D. Coutts, G. J. Fitchett *et al.*).

(Central and East Asia) The first record for Britain and Ireland. The 1978 report warned observers of the possibility of Brown Shrike occurring in western Europe, but it was A. R. Dean's paper on field characters of Isabelline *L. isabellinus* and Brown Shrikes (*Brit. Birds* 75: 395-406) that really helped to point out the possibility and presented a tentative review of identification criteria.

**Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* (1, 17, 1)

**Devon** Wembury, first-winter, showing characters closest to *L. i. phoenicuroides*, 8th November (N. Bray, R. Eynon *et al.*).

(South Asia to China) This species is removed from the Irish list following the review by the Irish Rare Birds Committee of records at Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 9th and 10th October 1962 and 20th August 1976. An October record from Shetland and a November record from Norfolk remain under consideration. There were November records in 1982 and 1984, the latter also in Devon.

**Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* (32, 95, 1)

**Hereford & Worcestershire** Wythall, ♂, 4th June (J. Bishop, G. C. Hunt).

**1959 Humberside** Spurn (then Yorkshire), 12th May (J. S. Armitage, A. R. Hall).

(South and East Europe and Southwest Asia) The 1959 record is the only one for that year, and better late than never; a late record also comes from Ireland, with a juvenile at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, on 6th September 1985. The single in 1987 continues a run of rather poor years. Until the 1950s, this was a very rare vagrant; in the 1960s, records increased, with up to seven a year, and this continued until 1977. Since then, there have only once been more than three in a year.

**Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor* (1, 2, 0)

An individual showing the characters of the southern and eastern Siberian race *L. e. pallidirostris* was recorded as follows:

**1986 Suffolk** Landguard, trapped, 6th December (M. C. Marsh *et al.*).

(Southern and Eastern Siberia) The two previous records, referred to in the reports as 'Steppe Grey Shrike', were both on Fair Isle, on 21st September 1956 and on 18th October 1964. This species may be 'split', so watch out.

**Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* (101, 400, 10)

**Cornwall** The Lizard, ♂, 18th April (Mr & Mrs D. J. Leigh); presumed same, 24th to 26th (A. R. & H. C. Pay). Hayle, ♂, 30th April to 1st May (L. P. Williams *et al.*). Porthgwarra, ♀, 4th to 6th May (H. P. K. Robinson, M. P. Semmens *et al.*).

**Devon** Prawle, ♂, 4th May (J. Bragg, K. Tucker, N. Ward).

**Dorset** Portland, first-summer ♂, trapped, 5th May (P. Howlett, M. Rogers *et al.*).

**Kent** Dungeness, first-summer ♂, 26th April (C. D. Powell *et al.*).

**Lancashire** Fairhaven, juvenile, 29th to 31st August (E. Stirling *et al.*).

**Scilly** Samson, probably first-summer ♂, 17th to 23rd April (J. M. Hurley, J. & J. Protherough *et al.*). St Agnes, juvenile, 22nd August to about 19th September (W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

**Sussex**, West Pagham Harbour, juvenile, 14th to 15th August (C. M. & Mrs B. James, I. R. Watts *et al.*).

**1974 Scilly** St Agnes, juvenile, dead, 4th September (C. Rutter, D. Smallshire *et al.*).

**1986 Dumfries & Galloway** Lorg, High Water of Ken, ♀, 23rd July to 17th August (M. Kery, A. D. Watson *et al.*).

**1986 Humberside** Bampton Cliffs, probable ♂, 22nd to 26th May (M. Davies *et al.*).

(West, Central and South Europe, Southwest Asia and North Africa) There was one in Ireland in 1986: at Great Saltee, Co. Wexford, from 3rd to 8th May. A fair showing from this very consistent and always-exciting species.

**Nutcracker** *Nucifraga caryocatactes* (45, 357, 1)

**Cambridgeshire** Cherry Hinton, Cambridge, 13th February (Mrs J. Warner).

(Eurasia from Scandinavia and the Alps to Kamchatka and China) This remains an elusive, erratic and rare species, more expected in late autumn than in midwinter.

**Daurian Starling** *Sturnus sturninus* (0, 1, 0)

**1985 Shetland** Fair Isle, 7th to 28th May, trapped 21st (P. V. Harvey, N. J. Riddiford, K. B. Shepherd *et al.*).

(East Asia) The first record for Britain and Ireland (accepted in Category A). Surely one of the most unexpected birds ever (if only because many of us had never heard of it). The species breeds from Transbaikalia south through Mongolia, and winters in Southeast Asia and Java. The first record for Norway was on 29th September 1985.

**Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* (160, 165, 9)

**Grampian** Near Dufftown, adult, 13th June to 5th July (M. J. H. Cook, J. Dunbar *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 80: plate 253; 81: plate 295).

**Norfolk** Stalham, adult, 14th to 25th June (D. J. Holman *et al.*).

**Scilly** St Mary's, juvenile, 7th to 13th September (W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*); juvenile moulting to first-winter, 5th November to at least 7th December (C. D. R. Heard *et al.*).

**Staffordshire** Hockley, Tamworth, adult, 27th July (W. Hayes, J. Oliver).

**Strathclyde** Port Wemyss and Portnahaven, Islay, adult, 10th August to 3rd September (M. G. Collis, Dr M. A. Ogilvie *et al.*).

**Surrey** Normandy, Guildford, adult, 17th October to 6th January 1988 (J. M. Clark, Mr & Mrs J. R. Romaine, Mr & Mrs D. R. Tier *et al.*)(plates 87 & 306).



306. Adult Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus*, Surrey, November 1987 (Dominic Mitchell)

**Tyne & Wear** Sunderland, adult, 3rd to 5th July (P. Boughton, A. & Mrs R. Donnison *et al.*).

**1985 Highland** Watten Mains, Caithness, adult, 25th September (S. Manson).

**1986 Cornwall** Davidstow, juvenile, 21st September (N. J. Cabbie *et al.*).

**1986 Shetland** Noss, possibly first-summer, 14th to 18th June, East Burra, first-summer, 23rd to 28th June (*Brit. Birds* 80: 563), considered same (per J. N. Dymond), still present 29th (J. Regan *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia) Also an adult at Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford, on 12th July. An average year, with a summer record in Scotland and autumn juveniles in Scilly conforming to the usual pattern.

### **Philadelphia Vireo** *Vireo philadelphicus* (0, 1, 1)

**Scilly** Tresco, first-winter, 10th to 13th October (J. Brodie Good, R. A. Filby *et al.*).

(North America) One of the best finds of the autumn, this came quickly after the first Western Palearctic record in Ireland, only two days short of exactly two years earlier. Will it follow the example of some other recent additions to the list and crop up again soon?

### **Red-eyed Vireo** *Vireo olivaceus* (1, 36, 6)

**Cornwall** Nanquidno, first-winter, 9th October (K. G. Croft, A. Davies, P. Wheeler *et al.*).  
Trevail, first-winter, trapped 17th, 25th October (G. Gynn).

**Devon** East Prawle, first-winter, 11th to 17th October (P. M. Mayer, M. C. Powell, A. L. Stewart *et al.*).

**Dorset** Hengistbury Head, first-winter, 12th October (P. Morrison, D. N. Smith *et al.*).

**Scilly** St Mary's, first-winter, 9th to 11th October (G. N. Smith *et al.*). St Agnes, first-winter, 9th to 16th October (M. L. Passant *et al.*).

**1985 Highland** Wick, Caithness, first-winter, 13th to 16th October (K. W. Banks *et al.*).

(North America) The year 1985's record total moves on to ten, plus

three in Ireland; 1987 beats 1981 (when there were five) to take its place as second-best year ever. Seventeen have been in Scilly (matching Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*), the rest quite widely spread, but the 1985 record above is the first in Scotland. There are six late-September records; otherwise, the first half of October is the almost invariable period of arrival.

**Arctic Redpoll** *Carduelis hornemanni* (30, 117, 3)

**Gwynedd** Bardsey, 3rd to 4th May (S. Anderson, T. Collins, P. Slade *et al.*).

**Shetland** Fair Isle, 25th September to 2nd October (K. Osborn, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 12th October (R. J. & S. J. Aspinall *et al.*).

**1984 Humberside** Spurn, 7th November (S. L. James).

**1985 Humberside** Spurn, first-winter ♂, 14th to 17th January, trapped 17th (B. R. Spence). Saltend Marsh, 25th November (S. L. James).

**1985 Norfolk** Holkham Meals, 14th April (M. C. Buckland *et al.*), probably additional to those already published (*Brit. Birds* 80: 565).

**1986 Norfolk** Winterton Dunes, 26 January (P. R. Colston, A. J. Livett); probably another. 16th February (T. H. Barker).

**1986 Suffolk** Benacre, 18th February (P. M. Beeson, D. R. Powell).

(Circumpolar Arctic) A normal year after the sudden bursts of 1984 and 1985. The May record from Gwynedd is, however, exceptional.

**Two-barred Crossbill** *Loxia leucoptera* (40, 26, 1)

**Shetland** Bigton, juvenile ♂, 11th to 19th August, trapped 11th (J. Morton *et al.*).

**1986 Central Region** Carron Valley Forest, ♀, since 14th October 1985 to 31st March (*Brit. Birds* 80: 566), 19th April (G. J. Etherington).

(Northeast Europe, North-central Asia, northern North America and West Indies) After the appeal in the report for 1985, the record from the New Forest in 1984 remains under active consideration, as do 11 further reports from the Northern Isles in 1987.

**Parrot Crossbill** *Loxia pytyopsittacus* (10, 220, 1)

**Highland** Locality withheld, first-winter ♂, 11th to at least 22nd March, trapped 11th (R. H. Dennis, R. Proctor *et al.*).

**1985 Derbyshire** Longshaw and Padley area, three juveniles, 27th June, 3rd, 13th July (P. A. Ardron, A. Worthy).

**1986 Suffolk** Locality withheld, ♂, two ♀♀ or immatures, at least 8th March, ♂, 17th (*Brit. Birds* 80: 566); nearby locality, two, at least one ♂, presumed of same, 16th February (M. D. Crewe).

(Scandinavia and West Russia) After recent events, it is good to see that the species has not entirely deserted us, yet.

**Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes githagineus* (0, 5, 1)

**Northumberland** Holy Island, ♂, 1st August (R. K. Stephenson).

(Southeast Spain, Canary Islands, Northern Africa and Southwest Asia) The second in autumn; why they have begun to turn up here remains a mystery, and little real pattern has yet emerged (three in May, one in June, one in August, one in September, from West Sussex to Sutherland and Orkney). M. Greenwood has commented on the note by P. James (*Brit. Birds* 79: 299-300), reaffirming that the absence of a ring does not necessarily rule out captive origin, that feather abrasion of captive birds is



quite rare and that Trumpeter Finches, though quite rare in captivity, are offered for sale by British dealers.

**Black-and-white Warbler** *Mniotilta varia* (1, 9, 1)

**Devon** East Prawle, 8th to 15th October (N. L. Trigg *et al.*).

(North America) This is a remarkable American passerine, with one in Shetland in 1936, no more until one in Scilly in 1975, and now nine more since then; and only one of those in Scilly, where it might be expected to be most regular. This is the second for Devon.

**Northern Parula** *Parula americana* (0, 10, 1)

**Cornwall** Nanquidno, ♂, 13th to 23rd October (A. Rosier, P. A. Wain *et al.*).

(North America) A typical date for this delicate vagrant.

**Chestnut-sided Warbler** *Dendroica pensylvanica* (0, 1, 0)

**1985 Shetland** Fetlar, first-year, 20th September (M. A. & Mrs V. M. Peacock).

(North America) The first record for Britain and Ireland.

**Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Dendroica coronata* (1, 15, 1)

(North America) There was a juvenile at Loop Head, Co. Clare, from 31st October to 2nd November 1986 and, in 1987, a male at Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 8th and 9th October.

**Blackpoll Warbler** *Dendroica striata* (0, 24, 1)

**Scilly** Tresco, first-winter, 12th to 22nd October (M. Cade, N. C. Moores, G. Walbridge *et al.*).

(North America) The seventeenth for Scilly.

**American Redstart** *Setophaga ruticilla* (0, 7, 0)

**1985 Hampshire** Winchester College Water Meadows, first-winter ♂, 4th to 6th October (A. Baldock, D. Jackman, S. K. Wooley).

(North America) Perhaps not ideally placed for hundreds of observers to see it. The year 1985 was already on record as a sensational autumn for American landbirds, with a wide geographical scatter as well as exceptional numbers and variety. Two extra species for the British list plus this lovely American Redstart make it that much more extraordinary.

**Wilson's Warbler** *Wilsonia pusilla* (0, 1, 0)

**1985 Cornwall** Rame Head, ♂, 13th October (R. BurrIDGE, K. Pellow, R. Smaldon *et al.*) (plate 301).

(North America) The first record for Britain and Ireland.

**Savannah Sparrow** *Ammodramus sandwichensis* (0, 1, 1)

**Shetland** Fair Isle, first-winter, 30th September to 1st October, trapped 30th (P. J. Ellis, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

(North America, Mexico and Guatemala) First recorded as recently as April 1982, but predicted as a possible American vagrant (*Brit. Birds* 73: 448-457), now reconfirming that promise, and a major prize for Fair Isle.

**White-throated Sparrow** *Zonotrichia albicollis* (1, 13, 2)

**Shetland** Norwick, Unst, 13th to 15th May (G. Gray, M. Sinclair, I. Spence *et al.*); Kergord, 16th June (C. & D. K. Lamsdell) (*Brit. Birds* 80: plate 256; 81: plate 307).



307. White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*, Shetland, June 1987 (C. Lamsdell)

(North America) One or both may have been first-summer individuals, but they differed in plumage detail. May and June are typical months.

**Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalos* (2, 7, 4)

**Orkney** North Ronaldsay, first-winter ♂, trapped, 19th October, released 20th (Miss A. E. Duncan, M. G. Pennington *et al.*); first-winter ♂, 3rd to 9th November, trapped 3rd, released 4th (M. G. Pennington *et al.*).

**Shetland** Fair Isle, ♂, 11th to 20th October (R. J. & S. J. Aspinall, K. Osborn, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); ♀ or immature, 22nd October (S. J. Aspinall), probably same, aged as first-winter ♀, 29th October to 13th November, trapped 29th (S. J. Aspinall, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

(Urals, across Asia to Sakhalin) A record year, like a better version of 1980, with October and November records on Fair Isle; otherwise records are in January, April (three) and August.

**Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* (34, 156, 12)

**Dorset** Portland, 20th to 22nd October (G. Walbridge *et al.*).

**Dyfed** Skomer, ♂, 31st May (M. Greenhalgh, J. Hayes, S. J. Sutcliffe).

**Lothian** Skateraw, ♀, 26th May (G. Anderson, A. Brown, P. R. Gordon *et al.*).

**Norfolk** Cley, ♂, 23rd May (M. R. Leven *et al.*).

**Orkney** Stronsay, 21st October (J. F. Holloway, D. Peace) (fig. 7).

**Shetland** Fair Isle, sex indeterminate, 22nd May (Dr J. R. Allan, P. A. T. Clabburn, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); ♂, 4th to 5th June, trapped 4th (Dr J. R. Allan, S. J. Aspinall, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); ♀, 8th to 9th June (Dr J. R. Allan, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 23rd to 24th September (M. Corner, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 2nd October (B. Reed, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*). Out Skerries, 3rd to 21st October, trapped 8th, 16th (Dr B. Marshall, E. Tait).

**Strathclyde** Hynish, Tiree, ♂, 4th June (M. J. Everett, M. Green, A. Knight *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe across to North Asia) A fine year for this perky bunting; May and October are the classic months, and the rather wide scatter of localities is also typical.



Fig. 7. Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*, Orkney, October 1987 (J. F. Holloway)

**Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* (93, 298, 35)

**Berkshire** Datchet, 18th to at least 31st January (C. D. R. Heard *et al.*).

**Buckinghamshire** Woodlands Park, Iver Heath, ♂, 17th March to 26th April when in song (C. D. R. Jones, R. J. Safford *et al.*).

**Devon** Prawle Point, 23rd October (D. A. Cope). Lundy, 25th October (A. H. J. Harrop *et al.*).

**Essex** East Mersea, 25th October (C. A. Harvey, R. P. Hull, A. Undrill).

**Gwynedd** Bardsey, ♀, trapped, 9th May (S. Anderson, T. Collins *et al.*); 1st October (P. J. Donnelly, D. Okines *et al.*).

**Northumberland** Hauxley, 18th to 20th September (I. Fisher *et al.*).

**Orkney** Near Kirkwall, 22nd September (R. J. Wilkinson). North Ronaldsay, at least four: 2nd to 7th October (P. A. Gammage, J. Young *et al.*); 5th to 12th (Dr A. M. Hanby, R. E. Innes *et al.*); 29th (M. G. Pennington, Dr K. F. Woodbridge *et al.*); probably same, 3rd November (M. G. Pennington); 7th to 16th November, trapped 8th (Miss A. E. Duncan, C. C. McGuigan, J. J. Sweeney *et al.*).

**Scilly** St Agnes, 4th October (R. A. Hargreaves, C. D. R. Heard *et al.*); 18th (J. D. Holding, A. Noeske *et al.*). St Mary's, 11th to 16th October (J. Gates, G. K. Gordon, P. N. Prior *et al.*); 23rd to at least 27th (C. D. R. Heard *et al.*). Treco, 11th to 14th October (D. Middleton *et al.*); 25th to 3rd November, two, 29th to 2nd (R. A. Filby, K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*).

**Shetland** Fair Isle, at least nine: 21st September (Mrs S. M. Johns *et al.*); 21st to 27th (S. J. Aspinall, J. N. Dymond, K. Osborn *et al.*); 1st to 4th October (S. J. Aspinall, J. R. Delve *et al.*); 2nd to 5th (N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 2nd to 9th, trapped 7th (S. J. Aspinall *et al.*); 4th to 7th (S. J. Aspinall, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 12th to 20th (N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 29th to 1st November (J. R. Allan, S. J. Aspinall, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 31st (J. R. Allan, S. J. Aspinall *et al.*). Out Skerries, 22nd to 23rd September (Dr C. F. Mackenzie *et al.*); 1st to at least 13th October, trapped 4th (Dr B. Marshall, E. Tait); first-winter, 8th to 23rd, trapped 13th (E. & M. Tait).

**Suffolk** Landguard, trapped, 19th October (D. P. Butterfield, J. Grant *et al.*).

**Sussex**, East Litlington, trapped, 4th October (D. A. & T. W. Parmenter *et al.*).

**1986 Essex** Landguard Point, first-winter, trapped, 10th October (*Brit. Birds* 80: 567), locality is in Suffolk.

**1986 Humberside** Spurn, 15th October (N. A. Bell, I. Crowther); probably same, 18th (I. J. Degnam, D. Page, J. M. Turton).

**1986 Shetland** Whalsay, 8th to 12th October (Dr B. Marshall).

**1986 Suffolk** See 1986 Essex above.

**1986 Yorkshire, North** Skipton, 21st September (P. M. Wright).

(Northeast Europe and North Asia) One was on Dursey Island, Co. Cork, on 3rd October. Also one on Guernsey, Channel Islands, on 20th October. Winter records are still unusual, but appear to be becoming more frequent. Otherwise, a fairly typical batch.

**Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola* (10, 119, 5)

**Shetland** Fair Isle, five ♀♀ or immatures: 27th to 28th August (S. J. Aspinall); 2nd September (S. J. Aspinall, M. O'Rourke *et al.*); 15th to 16th (D. R. W. Gilmore, J. P. Hunt, R. J. Martin *et al.*); 16th September (J. N. Dymond, S. J. M. Gantlett, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 20th (R. J. Arnfield, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe across North Asia) The record of one at Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 11th October 1961 is now considered unacceptable by the Irish Rare Birds Committee. Fair Isle is still *the* place.

**Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephala* (9, 61, 4)

**Dyfed** Skokholm, ♂, 26th May (A. Newman).

**Humberside** Broomfleet Ponds, ♂, 20th June (T. A. Ede).

**Kent** Dungeness, ♂, 27th June (S. P. Clancy *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 80: plate 251).

**Scilly** Tresco, ♂, 7th to 21st September (W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

**1986 Gwynedd** Carmel Head, Anglesey, ♂, 18th May (S. Clethro).

(Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia) Another crop of males (females are not *so* nondescript). The 1983 report implied that a decline in reports may have been due to reduced importation of birds from India, but 1986 was the seventh year since 1958 with more than three individuals, and 1987 becomes the eighth; the species has never become more than a very rare vagrant, usually in May and June, though some records in the 1970s were surprisingly early in May, or even in April, well before the species arrives in strength in Southeast Europe.

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak** *Phaeucticus ludovicianus* (0, 18, 2)

**Scilly** Tresco, first-winter ♀, 9th to 21st October (R. Crossley, Miss D. Goldsmith, P. I. Holt *et al.*).

**1985 Devon** Lundy, first-winter ♂, trapped, 27th October (*Brit. Birds* 79: 583), was first-winter ♀.

(North America) Also a juvenile female on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, from 7th to 24th October (plate 302), and one on Guernsey, Channel Islands, from 10th to 13th October. With the alteration of the Lundy record, the British and Irish occurrences of this splendid species now involve 12 males and eight females.

**Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (0, 14, 0)

**1986 Western Isles** St Kilda, 28th September (D. Miller).

(North America) The second for 1986, one day before an individual on Fair Isle.

## Appendix 1. Category D species accepted (see *Brit. Birds* 64: 429)

**Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius* (0, 3, 1) ..

Gwynedd Moel-y-Cest, near Portmadoc, ♂, 4th June (P. Robinson).

(Southern Europe, Southern Asia and Northwest Africa) The categorisation of this species is under consideration by the BOU Records Committee.

**Chestnut Bunting** *Emberiza rutila* (0, 4, 0)

1986 Gwynedd Bardsey, immature ♂, 18th to 19th June, trapped 19th (J. Alexander, T. Collins, D. Walker *et al.*).

(East Asia) The comment in last year's report (*Brit. Birds* 80: 568) was incorrect; all three records have not been males, the 1985 record on the Isle of May involving a female of undetermined age. This species is under consideration for promotion to Category A.

## Appendix 2. List of records not accepted 1987

**White-billed Diver** Doonfoot, Strathclyde, 24th April; Peterhead, Grampian, 15th May; Pennan, Grampian, 2nd August. **Pied-billed Grebe** Otter Estuary, Devon, 31st January. **Great White Egret** Near Spurn, Humberside, 28th June. **Black Stork** Lamarsh, Suffolk, 24th October. **American Wigeon** Brimpton Gravel-pits, Berkshire, two, 16th February; Elford Gravel-pits, Staffordshire, 6th to 7th September; Stanpit Marsh, Dorset, 16th September; Bardsey, Gwynedd, 30th September. **King Eider** Dovercourt, Essex, 13th February. **Black Kite** Exe Estuary, Devon, 26th January; Holbrook Gardens, Suffolk, 28th March; Aldeburgh, Suffolk, 19th April; Hanningfield Reservoir, Essex, 7th May; Stanpit Marsh, Dorset, 11th May; East Rudham, Norfolk, 16th May; Titchwell, Norfolk, 23rd May; near Titchwell, 27th May; Histon, Cambridgeshire, 28th May; Calver, Derbyshire, 28th June; near Taunton, Somerset, 9th August. **White-tailed Eagle** Tregaron Bog, Dyfed, 21st November. **Lesser Kestrel** Cley, Norfolk, 13th September. **Red-footed Falcon** Wivenhoe, Essex, 21st April; Tophill Low Reservoir, Humberside, 4th May; St Osyth, Essex, 9th May; Stanpit Marsh, Dorset, 10th May; Pow Hill, Durham, 24th May; Tophill Low Reservoir, Humberside, 12th June; Thetford, Norfolk, 14th July; Nesting, Shetland, 14th August; Shoreham, West Sussex, 14th August; Halesworth, Suffolk, 28th August; Hengistbury Head, Dorset, 24th September; Exminster Marshes, Devon, 2nd November. **Gyr Falcon** Twynholm, Dumfries & Galloway, 25th February. **Crane** Chawton, Hampshire, two, 12th April; Bath, Avon, 26th June; Walton-on-the-Wolds, Leicestershire, twenty, 9th August; Darlington, Durham, 24th August. **Collared Pratincole** Clevedon, Avon, 14th June. **Pratincole** Church Norton, West Sussex, 14th May; Northam Burrows, Devon, 27th May; Harlow, Essex, 9th July; Street, Somerset, 2nd August. **Western Sandpiper** Stewartby, Bedfordshire, 12th September. **Baird's Sandpiper** Dawlish Warren, Devon, 2nd September. **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** Don Estuary, Grampian, 4th to 5th February; Stanpit Marsh, Dorset, 20th September. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** Pegwell Bay, Kent, 23rd May; Frodsham, Cheshire, 19th October; 22nd October. **Great Snipe** Needwood, Staffordshire, 4th October; St Leonard's, East Sussex, 9th November. **Dowitcher** Martin Mere, Lancashire, 1st May; Spurn, Humberside, 8th, 9th August; Holland Haven, Essex, two, 7th September. **Marsh Sandpiper** Martin Mere, Lancashire, 18th August. **Spotted Sandpiper** Stithians Reservoir, Cornwall, 19th August. **Laughing Gull** Aberystwyth, Dyfed, 9th March; Hebburn, Tyne & Wear, 6th September. **Franklin's Gull** Pett Level, East Sussex, 2nd January. **Bonaparte's Gull** Taw Estuary, Devon, 20th January; Folkestone, Kent, 18th July. **Slender-billed Gull** Anglers Country Park, South Yorkshire, 15th October. **Ring-billed Gull** East Looe River, Cornwall, 18th January; William Girling Reservoir, Greater London, 20th January; Lossiemouth, Grampian, 4th February; Tywyn Point, Dyfed, 15th February; Doonfoot, Strathclyde, 12th March; Ynysyfro Reservoir, Gwent, 17th March; Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, 10th April; near Caldy Island, Dyfed, 24th August; Kildonan, South Uist, Western Isles, 31st August; Titchwell, Norfolk, 6th September; 13th September; Southsea, Hampshire, 17th to 18th October;

Amroth, Dyfed, 22nd November; Willingdon, East Sussex, 29th November. **Ivory Gull** North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 10th December. **Gull-billed Tern** Hengistbury Head, Dorset, 1st April; Rustington, West Sussex, 9th May; Blakeney Point, Norfolk, 1st September; Calshot, Hampshire, 25th October; Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, 28th October. **Caspian Tern** Beachy Head, East Sussex, 27th May; Frimley, Surrey, 22nd August. **Whiskered Tern** Havergate Island, Suffolk, 20th September. **White-winged Black Tern** Landguard, Suffolk, 12th August; Blakeney Point, Norfolk, 30th August. **Chimney Swift** Wool, Dorset, 19th October. **Pallid Swift** Ipswich, Suffolk, 14th September. **Alpine Swift** Porthgwarra, Cornwall, 19th August. **Bee-eater** Thurnby, Leicestershire, 11th July. **Black Woodpecker** Dulverton, Somerset, 11th May. **Crested Lark** Barnstaple, Devon, 7th March. **Red-rumped Swallow** Black Gutter Bottom, Hampshire, 24th April; Sunderland, Tyne & Wear, two, 6th October. **Red-throated Pipit** Near Tintagel, Cornwall, 19th May. **'Black-headed' Yellow Wagtail** Bardsey, Gwynedd, 11th May. **'Siberian' Stonechat** Tresco, Scilly, 29th October. **Isabelline Wheatear** Retford, Nottinghamshire, 11th to 13th October. **Pied Wheatear** Weybourne, Norfolk, 15th May; Treeton, South Yorkshire, 7th to 11th June. **Black-eared Wheatear** Calf of Man, 24th May. **Desert Wheatear** Neumann's Flash, Cheshire, 16th May; North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 13th to 14th October. **White's Thrush** Northam, Devon, 17th January. **Dusky/Naumann's Thrush** Worthing, West Sussex, 17th January; St Leonard's, East Sussex, January, date not stated; Bothenhampton, Dorset, 28th April. **American Robin** Honiton, Devon, 30th December. **Greenish Warbler** Alum Bay, Isle of Wight, 4th September. **Pallas's Warbler** Littlehampton, West Sussex, 16th November. **Radde's Warbler** Donna Nook, Lincolnshire, 3rd October. **Dusky Warbler** Stanpit Marsh, Dorset, 18th September. **Bonelli's Warbler** Folkestone Warren, Kent, 5th July. **Nutcracker** Pengan Airport, Mid Glamorgan, 15th January. **Rock Bunting** Tidenham Chase, Gloucestershire, 22nd March. **Rustic Bunting** Buckie Loch, Grampian, 14th March. **Little Bunting** Ringwood, Hampshire, 3rd January; near Arbroath, Tayside, 7th February; Girdleness, Grampian, two, 21st October.

## 1986

**White-billed Diver** Hunstanton, Norfolk, 9th December. **Cattle Egret** Bittaford, Devon, 13th April. **Surf Scoter** Aqualate Mere, Staffordshire, 15th November. **Black Kite** Balsdean, East Sussex, 21st August. **Red-footed Falcon** Holme, Norfolk, 20th July. **Gyr Falcon** Fair Isle, Shetland, 20th February. **Crane** Blacktoft Sands, Humberside, 30th May. **White-rumped Sandpiper** Stanpit Marsh, Dorset, 16th to 18th September. **Dowitcher** Spurn, Humberside, 26th August. **Laughing Gull** Church Norton, West Sussex, 16th November. **Ring-billed Gull** South Walney, Cumbria, 17th February; Aberogwen, Gwynedd, 22nd April; Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, 30th November. **Gull-billed Tern** Willen Lake, Buckinghamshire, 9th to 12th August. **Sooty Tern** Near Newton of Murcar, Grampian, 7th September; Loch Fleet, Highland, 12th September. **White-winged Black Tern** Porlock Marsh, Somerset, 11th August. **Snowy Owl** Exmoor, Somerset, 23rd November. **Pallid Swift** Blacktoft Sands, Humberside, 10th June. **Red-throated Pipit** Belvide Reservoir, Staffordshire, 6th April; Lodmoor, Dorset, 16th August. **White's Thrush** Kirkwall, Orkney, 3rd January. **Swainson's Thrush** Ashley Green, Buckinghamshire, 24th September. **Greenish Warbler** Spurn, Humberside, 26th August. **Dusky Warbler** St Mary's, Scilly, 9th October. **Collared Flycatcher** Minchinghampton, Gloucestershire, two, 4th April; Bryher, Scilly, 25th to 28th October. **Nutcracker** Eastbridge, Suffolk, 4th May. **Rose-coloured Starling** Truro, Cornwall, 1st November; Shrewsbury, Shropshire, 2nd November. **Arctic Redpoll** Winterton Dunes, Norfolk, 26th January; 20th March; Molesey Heath, Surrey, 15th February; Marlow, Buckinghamshire, 26th December. **Two-barred Crossbill** Talkinhead, Cumbria, 6th May. **Little Bunting** Marlow, Buckinghamshire, 4th April; Skaw, Unst, Shetland, 14th September; Greenan Farm, Ayr, Strathclyde, 22nd December.

## 1985

**White-billed Diver** Holy Island, Northumberland, 22nd September. **American Wigeon** Tophill Low Reservoir, Humberside, 12th April to 6th May. **Black Kite** Benacre, Suffolk, 18th August. **Red-footed Falcon** Upper Coombe Dale, Derbyshire, 24th September; Isle of Whithorn, Dumfries & Galloway, 4th December. **Ring-billed Gull** Southsea, Hampshire, 20th January; Bartley Reservoir, West Midlands, 1st March; Hilbre, Merseyside, 4th April;

Millbrook Lake, Cornwall, 23rd November. **Caspian Tern** Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, 16th May. **Alpine Swift** Little Marlow, Buckinghamshire, two, 19th October. **Bee-eater** Fosdyke, Lincolnshire, 16th September. **Booted Warbler** Saddlington Reservoir, Leicestershire, 5th May. **Arctic Redpoll** Hornsea, Humberside, two, 3rd February; Cley, Norfolk, 29th December.

## 1984

**Night Heron** Welches Dam, Cambridgeshire, 15th June. **'Black' Common Scoter** Orphir, Orkney, 16th July. **Great Snipe** Bishop's Dyke, Hampshire, 20th November. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** Lundy, Devon, 28th September.

**1983 'Black' Common Scoter** Hengistbury Head, Dorset, 23rd September.

**1981 Cory's Shearwater** Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, two, 12th August.

**1978 Great Snipe** Sheringham, Norfolk, 9th December.

**1977 Rustic Bunting** Kinloch, Rhum, Highland, 23rd May.

# Mystery photographs

**137** There are no other small birds around with which to compare our mystery passerine (plates 242, 308 & 309), but it is obviously very small in comparison to the grass and clods of earth. From a







combination of the size, relatively small head, thin insectivorous bill and long thin tarsi, it is either a Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* or a *Phylloscopus*; but which one?

The lack of any wing bar rules out five of the West Palearctic species, and surely the face pattern is too prominent for Bonelli's *P. bonelli*? This narrows the field down to Booted and seven *Phylloscopus* warblers: Radde's *P. schwarzi*, Dusky *P. fuscatus*, Wood *P. sibilatrix*, Plain Willow *P. neglectus* and Willow Warblers *P. trochilus*, and Chiffchaff *P. collybita* and Mountain Chiffchaff *P. sindianus*.

It is obviously dark, both above and below, especially on the flanks, and a short primary projection suggests that this is quite a short-winged bird. These two features eliminate Wood Warbler (which is both very long-winged and clean on the flanks) and make Willow Warbler less likely. The legs are very dark or black; so is the visible part of the bill. These features push Radde's, Dusky and Booted Warblers out of the running: all three are extensively pale on the lower mandible; Radde's has thick, straw-coloured legs; Booted has translucent pink or fleshy-grey or even plain pale-grey legs; and Dusky has two-tone legs, dark brown at the front, but distinctly yellow on the posterior edge. Also, neither the supercilium nor the eye-stripe are as distinctive as those of Radde's. Booted has a less distinct facial pattern than our bird, and, though slight for a *Hippolais*, its bill is more robust than that of our bird, and has an almost entirely pale lower mandible. The plumage, however, does seem rather similar to that of Dusky.

There is little else to go on; the bird is a small, short-winged *Phylloscopus* warbler, dark on the upperparts and darkly suffused on the flanks. The eye is quite small and there is a prominent, but rather bluntly terminated supercilium, which joins over the bill. There is a pronounced eye-stripe, especially in front of the eye, and the crown appears to darken laterally, where it joins the supercilium. The bird has black legs and feet, and all the bill appears to be dark.

Plain Willow Warbler can, perhaps, be eliminated by our bird's rather-too-conspicuous supercilium and eye-stripe, but consider the subspecies of Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff: some Willows may show a face pattern as strong as that of our bird, but not the short wings nor the black legs and feet; no race of Chiffchaff has a face pattern quite so contrasting as that of the mystery *Phylloscopus*, but the brown Turkish race *P. c. brevirostris*, and some forms of the Siberian *P. c. tristis* have the general appearance of our bird. The choice lies between these and Mountain Chiffchaff. When observing this individual, the total lack of olive in the plumage (including rump and fringes of the flight feathers), and, it must be admitted, the geographical location, made the bird easier to identify correctly as a Mountain Chiffchaff. The *British Birds* reader, lacking information on location, will have done well to reach this conclusion.

I photographed these birds in Georgia, USSR, in May 1984, during a fall of migrants in a high pass. Mountain Chiffchaffs are short-distance or altitudinal migrants, which breed in the Caucasus in the Soviet Union,

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310. Mystery photograph 138. Identify the species. Answer next month



and probably Turkey, and winter south to Iraq. The field identification of Mountain Chiffchaff has recently been the subject of a short paper (Shirihai 1987).

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#### REFERENCE

SHIRIHAI, H. 1987. Field characters of Mountain Chiffchaff. In *International Bird Identification: Proceedings of the 4th International Identification Meeting Eilat 1st-8th November 1986*, pp. 60-63.

## Seventy-five years ago...

'THE RED-THROATED DIVER IN ITS BREEDING-HAUNTS. BY E. L. TURNER. HON. MEM. B.O.U. We can hardly imagine a greater contrast than that which exists between an English hedgerow in early June and the haunt of the Red-throated Diver. In the one:

All little birds that are

How they seem to fill the sea and air

With their sweet jargonings.

And if the birds are silent, there is the hum of insect-life, and the thousand and one indefinable sounds which make summer.

But the locality chosen by the Red-throated Diver (*Gavia stellata*) for the up-bringing of its young, is remote from man, and pervaded by a silence often so profound and absolute, that the sudden rattle of a focal-plane shutter startles the photographer as much, and perhaps more, than it does the bird. After hours of long waiting, when one is tired and dispirited, the wild call of the Red-throated Diver is enough to make one's flesh creep: it resembles the cry of a little child in pain, but is more akin maybe to the wail of a lost spirit, echoing and re-echoing round the lonely hills.' (*Brit. Birds* 7:150, November 1913)

## Notes

**Grey Heron ingesting junk** On 16th June 1981, at West Sedgemoor, Somerset, I found a juvenile Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*; extremely weak and almost prostrate, it was easily caught. I took it to a nearby farm, where I was told that it had been seen in a weak condition, barely able to fly, a day or two before. It soon died. On dissection, a hard foam rubber 'eel' or 'snake' about 40 cm long and 2 cm in diameter at its thickest, tapering somewhat at both ends, was found tightly crammed into its stomach. No injuries or lesions were evident. The heron weighed 1,150 g.



BRIAN HILL

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**Reactions of Grey Heron attacked by Kestrel** On 13th April 1980, at Lee-on-Solent airfield, Gosport, Hampshire, a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* landed about 50 m from me. As I approached, a Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* flew straight at the heron and tried to hit it with its claws; the heron immediately took off and circled around, with the raptor flying after it. After about 30 seconds, the heron again landed, and then stood perfectly still; the Kestrel flew around and around its head, but made no attempt to attack, and after a few minutes resumed hovering across the road. About five minutes later, the heron took off; again it was attacked by the Kestrel, which flew at it with its claws extended. The heron landed immediately, and once more stood perfectly still; the Kestrel flew around its head for a few seconds, before flying off. About ten minutes later, the heron flew away. Perhaps standing still is one way in which herons discourage attackers.

REGINALD ALAN OSGOOD

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## Letters

**'Breeding status of the Gadwall in Britain and Ireland'** Since the publication of this paper (*Brit. Birds* 81: 51-66), a number of inaccuracies and sources of additional information have been brought to my attention. Gadwalls *Anas strepera* did in fact breed at Stockers Lake and Maple Cross, Hertfordshire, in 1983 (*Hertfordshire Bird Report* 1983). The species has bred regularly at Eye Brook Reservoir, Leicestershire, since 1978, not 1966 as stated in the paper, and Gadwalls first bred at Cropston Reservoir, Leicestershire, in 1974, not 1980 (see Hickling 1978, Mitcham 1984, Gamble 1985). The statement concerning the lack of breeding records from northeast Scotland is refuted by records of an adult with 12 young on Loch Morlich, near Aviemore, and a pair on Loch Gamhna, Highland, in June 1953 (Simms 1957).

My thanks go to David Gamble, Terry Mitchell, Eric Simms and Dr L. Smith for kindly taking the trouble to bring these points to my attention.

A. D. FOX

The Wildfowl Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BT

### REFERENCES

- GAMBLE, D. 1985. The increase of Gadwall and Ruddy Ducks in Leicestershire and Rutland. *The Birds of Leicestershire and Rutland* 1984.  
 HICKLING, R. A. O. 1978. *Birds in Leicestershire and Rutland*. Leicester.  
 MITCHAM, T. 1984. *The Birds of Rutland and its Reservoirs*. Wymondham.  
 SIMMS, E. 1957. *Voices of the Wild*. London.

**Blackbirds laying eggs on bare ground** Your editorial comment on J. C. Maxwell's recent note (*Brit. Birds* 81: 325) stated that the BTO knew of no comparable records of a Blackbird *Turdus merula* laying eggs in a bare area. In 1966 and 1967, however, you published notes by R. A. Frost and by me on Blackbirds laying eggs in an unlined hollow (*Brit. Birds* 59: 341) and on bare brickwork (60: 54-55).

NORMAN ELKINS

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# Announcements

## EXCLUSIVE SPECIAL OFFER!

**Waders** If you are interested in the ageing, sexing and identification of waders, a new book, *North Atlantic Shorebirds*, due to be published in the new year, will include state-of-the-art text together with stunning colour photographs of every relevant plumage. It is by *BB's* Photographic Consultant, Dr Richard Chandler, and many of the photographs have never been published before, having been obtained by him especially for this book during trips that Richard made to Europe, Africa and North America.

In view of the special link with *British Birds*, we have arranged with the publishers, Macmillan, that *BB* subscribers should be able to buy this book POST FREE and at the EXCLUSIVE pre-publication price of £10.95, instead of the usual £12.95. To obtain this concession, copies can be ordered NOW through British BirdShop; they will be despatched to *BB* subscribers as soon as they become available. Please use the form on pages xv & xvi.

Richard J. Chandler



**New books in British BirdShop** Note especially the EXCLUSIVE prepublication offer concerning Richard Chandler's *North Atlantic Shorebirds* (see above) and the continuing reduced-price offers concerning *International Bird Identification*, *Crows of the World*, *The Natural History of the USSR* and *Frontiers of Bird Identification*. The following books are added to our recommended list this month:

Busby *Birds in Mallorca*

Chandler *The Macmillan Field Guide to North Atlantic Shorebirds*

Voous *Owls of the Northern Hemisphere*

Please use the British BirdShop forms on pages xv & xvi.

## Thailand

Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ; or telephone 0767-40025.

There are still a couple of places available for the special, relaxed, small-group *BB* trip to Thailand during 17th February to 7th March 1989. Write at once for details to: Thai trip, British Birds, Fountains,

**Money matters** We can accept cheques in three currencies, £ sterling, IR£ or US dollars (not Canadian dollars). These cheques must be drawn on a bank based in the country whose currency is being used. We can also accept Eurocheques made out in £ sterling, but not in US dollars or IR£.

It is possible to buy a cheque in £ sterling from almost any bank in the world, provided that it has an agreement with a UK-based bank. We cannot accept cheques in £ sterling (or US dollars) which are drawn on a bank outside the UK (or the US).

If you are paying directly into our GIRO account, be warned that long delays often occur between your payment and our receipt of the money.

ERIKA SHARROCK

# Review

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**RSPB Conservation Review. Number 1, 1987. Edited by C. James Cadbury and Michael Everett. RSPB, Sandy, 1987. 96 pages; 20 colour plates; 24 black-and-white plates. Paperback £3.00.**

For some years now, the need for a new regular publication by the RSPB has been discussed both within and outwith the organisation. *Birds*, while providing the membership with news of the Society's activities, plus chatty articles and lots of photographs, is not suited for more serious accounts of research into conserving birds and their habitats.

RSPB staff have an excellent record of publishing their work in the major ornithological and ecological journals, but it is difficult to gain a comprehensive, and coherent, view of the important work being carried out. Articles in *Birds* can go only so far towards giving a wider audience a better picture of what is being achieved.

To answer this need, the RSPB have now published a handsomely produced, 96-page, A4-sized journal, plentifully illustrated in both colour and black-and-white. It is clearly stated that this is not a scientific publication, containing previously unpublished research results. It is a review of past and current work, intended to be accessible to a readership which, it is obviously hoped, will include those people (politicians, local government officials, drainage engineers, foresters, and others) who have the power to influence, whether for good or bad, the birds in Britain and the places where they live.

The contents are strongly oriented towards threatened habitats, now the main thrust of the RSPB's research, including lowland wet grasslands, estuaries and uplands. The emphasis is not just on the habitats and the species dependent on them, but also on practical management and ways of alleviating the worst problems. Sixteen papers cover the different habitats, while a further three deal with scarce breeding species, including the success stories of Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* and Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*. The journal commences with a list of staff in the RSPB's Conservation and Research divisions, and concludes with summaries of current research, species protection, investigations into law-breaking, overseas projects (an increasing aspect of RSPB work), and staff publications for the past two years.

The *RSPB Conservation Review* will be appearing annually, and, if following issues maintain the standard set here, will become a major publication in the field. Perhaps, for succeeding issues, the typography could be tidied up a little, especially the rather clumsy sub-headings; capitals, bold type and an underline is overdoing it a trifle. I can also see no reason why, in a purely ornithological publication, the species names cannot start with a capital letter and so stand out clearly in the text, to the assistance of the reader. They do in a diagram or two, where perhaps they were overlooked.

Finally, at £3.00, this is staggeringly good value, so write off for a copy now.

M. A. OGILVIE

# News and comment

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*Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch*

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

**Irish expedition to Northeast Greenland, 1987** We have received a copy of the report of this expedition which spent 78 days (29th May to 13th August) in one of the remotest and least studied parts of the planet within the World's largest national

park, in Northeast Greenland. There, in Nordmarken, at 77° 50' N, the Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* is found at its most northerly known breeding location. One of the main objectives of the expedition was to investigate the breeding biology and

summer ecology of the goose. The expedition also carried out detailed studies on certain plants as well as more general observations on the mammal and bird populations of the area, including the trapping and marking of the geese in order to establish their distribution in winter. It also hoped to establish detailed ecological baseline levels of certain long-range pollutants. The results form the bulk of the 150-page report—a must for all interested in Arctic ecology and in Greenland. It is obtainable, price £15.00, from Barnacle Books, Rockfort House, Dalkey, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

**Iberian Guillemots** Since we have so many of them, it is easy to get a bit blasé about breeding seabirds and to forget that in other countries species which we take for granted might be quite rare or endangered. Such is the case with the Iberian race of the Guillemot *Uria aalge ibericus*, now down to barely 100 pairs in four colonies off Spain and Portugal. The Spanish Ornithological Society, supported by cash from the EEC's programme of Urgent Actions for Endangered Species, has now launched a campaign to save this race from extinction. We wish them well and look forward to further news in due course.

Can you identify this bird?



This photograph was included in the latest SUNBIRD newsletter, and readers invited to identify the bird, with a prize of a free subscription to *British Birds* for the person whose name was drawn from among the correct entries. Of the entries, 54% were correct, and the winner of the draw was Seamus Enright of Ballylongford, Co. Kerry.

**The May safe** Early August brought good news to all Isle of May enthusiasts when it was announced that the famous Forth island is to be purchased by the Nature Conservancy Council. Best known, perhaps, for the Bird Observatory which has existed there since the 1930s, The May is also important as a field research centre. It was at the Low Light, too, that many of the original jottings of the late M. F. M. Meiklejohn appeared in the Observatory Log and began to delight birdwatchers in Scotland and beyond.

**Well done FC!** It is always nice to say a kind word about those we so often criticise—in this case, the Forestry Commission (although, to be fair, it is often forestry policy that upsets us, rather than the activities of the staff on the ground). In the Brecks, the FC organised a highly successful protection scheme for what was, in 1988, perhaps the only breeding pair of Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* in Britain. In the Highlands, they scored a notable first with a public-hide watch at the nest of a pair of Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus*. Let us hope they will be doing more of this sort of thing. As one FC bird man once said to one of us, there is a whole lot more to good forestry than merely growing trees.

The correct answer appears below.

This Little Grebe *Tachybaptus niglicollis* was photographed by Dr R. J. Chandler in Northamptonshire in January 1981. Eight other species were named, the commonest of these incorrect answers being Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*.



**Malawi rarities** Mrs Dale Hanmer (Suma, Private Bag 50, Blantyre, Malawi) has written to tell us of the formation of a Rarities Committee for Malawi. Anyone visiting the country is invited to contact her for a 'rare bird form'. What constitutes a rarity can be ascertained by reference to *The Birds of Malawi* by C. W. Benson and F. M. Benson (1977).

**More unknown species** Doug Radford has drawn our attention to another *Daily Telegraph* gem (22nd July 1988) which reports on a Greater Fanned Plover blown 'by strong winds' to Walney. Bob Medland, writing from Malawi, goes one better by sending us a standard BB reply postcard which informed him, three years ago, that his note on a 'Litter Tern in sub-adult plumage' had not been accepted for publication. Have you told Mrs Hanmer about this, Bob?

**Overseas birding** For a mere 60p, including p & p, Steve Whitehouse (5 Stanway Close, Blackpole, Worcester WR4 9XL) will send you a copy of his July 1988 catalogue, *Foreign Birdwatching Reports and Information Service*, an invaluable compilation listing

reports, checklists, site guides and much more, covering many parts of the globe. It is all based on Steve's first ten years of collecting material. It sounds like a good scheme... but we can't help thinking that future editions will just go on getting bigger and bigger.

**Conservation Review** The second (1988) issue of the RSPB's *Conservation Review* is also now available—again, a detailed account of recent work on the active conservation side. It costs £5 including p & p, from the RSPB (CLU), The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL; No. 1 is still available, price £3, or £2 if you order both issues together.

**BIY 1988** With over 120 guests, the Kowa-sponsored Press Reception at the Mall Galleries in July was an enormously enjoyable occasion (plates 312-315). It is always pleasant to mingle with the cream of British bird-artists, and we know that many of those who enter for the competition do so in order to get a display-artist's invitation to this annual occasion. We much value our links with the Society of Wildlife Artists and the Federation of British Artists.

**312. BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR.** Back row, left to right: Richard Tilt, Mr J. Nishi, Mr Y. Miwa and David Wallis (*Kowa* telescopes, sponsors), Martin Hallam (BIY winner), Dr Tim Sharrock (judge), Robert Bateman (guest presenter), Robert Gillmor (judge), and Darren Rees (BIY 4th). Front row, left to right, John Davis (BIY 3rd), Nicholas Pike (BIY 2nd), John Cox (Richard Richardson Award winner), Stephen Message (Richard Richardson Award runner-up), and John Hollyer (PJC Award winner), London, July 1988 (*Tessa Musgrave*)





**313. BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR.** Martin Hallam (right) receives his engraved salver, cheque and Kowa telescope from Mr Y. Miwa, London, July 1988 (Tessa Musgrave)



**314. THE RICHARD RICHARDSON AWARD.** John Cox (left) receives his cheque and inscribed book from Robert Bateman, London, July 1988 (Tessa Musgrave)

**315. THE PJC AWARD.** John Hollyer (left) is congratulated by David Cook, the Award's instigator, London, July 1988 (Tessa Musgrave)



**Italian NRC** We are grateful to Fulvio Fraticelli and Alberto Sorace for writing to tell us about 'Nidi Italia'—a nest record scheme for Italy, based on our own BTO version, which began in March 1988. It is organised by CISO (Italian Ornithological Study Centre). We hope that it proves a success.

**Spurn birds** *A List of the Birds of Spurn, 1946-1985*, by Brian Pashby, is a welcome addition to the literature of our most famous birding venues. It is available, price £4.25 including p & p, from Spurn Bird Observatory, Kilnsea, via Patrington, Hull, North Humberside HU12 0UG.

**NIOC pelagic trip** On 6th August, members of the Northern Ireland Ornithologists' Club set sail from Burtonport, Co. Donegal, for their second annual Irish pelagic cruise. By running these trips on different dates through August over the years, the members hope to be able to build up a picture of seabird movements throughout the month. Highlights of this year's trip included five Wilson's Petrels *Oceanites oceanicus* (one only 33 km off shore), seven Great Shearwaters *Puffinus gravis*, two Sabine's Gulls *Larus sabini* and 40 Sooty Shearwaters *P. griseus*, this latter species proving commoner than Manx Shearwater *P. puffinus*. Interestingly, Great Skua *Stercorarius skua* was the commonest skua this year, whereas Pomarine *S. pomarinus* was the most abundant on last year's trip, which took place a week later. (Contributed by Jack Malins)

#### 'Monthly marathon' winner comments

The day after learning that he had won the SUNBIRD holiday, Anthony McGeehan commented: 'Many thanks for your glad-tidings phone-call last night—I've a sore head this morning! I must emphasise how much I thoroughly enjoyed "Monthly marathon"—I feel I know infinitely more about quite a few species by this stage, encompassing not just those species which actually featured in the photographs, but all the many others which had to be eliminated from the identification process. I think the choice of photographs really was superb. They were a brilliant test of knowledge and were so good because they all were "solvable".'

We gather from Anthony that, for instance, he spent the best part of a day looking at museum skins to be sure that plate 222 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 464) showed a Black Redstart

*Phoenicurus ochruros* rather than a Redstart *P. phoenicurus*. With such dedication, we clearly have a very worthy winner.

**New bird names** We liked the image, conjured up by our printers in the galley-proofs of the 'Rarities report', of a Gyrofalcon—scientific name *Falco heli-*

*copterus*, perhaps—whirring overhead.

**Change of Recorder** Ken Shaw, 4 Headland Court, Newtonhill, near Stonehaven, Kincardine\* AB3 2SF, has taken over from Mike Innes as Recorder for Grampian (except Moray).

## July reports

*Keith Allsopp and Ian Dawson*



**These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records.  
Unless otherwise stated, dates refer to July 1988**

*The wettest July for over fifty years was the result of the track of the eastward-moving Atlantic depression being persistently farther south than normal, bringing unsettled cool weather. The winds were predominantly southwesterly in the south of Britain and Ireland, with occasional easterlies in the far north as the air circulated around the lows.*

### Shetland seabirds take downward turn

The 1988 breeding season was the worst ever for many of Shetland's seabirds. The **Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea* was the worst affected species; for the fifth successive year, no young survived from many formerly large

colonies, such as those on Papa Stour, Monsa and Foula, despite the clutches laid being of comparable size to those on Coquet Island (Northumberland), where Arctic Terns had a successful breeding season. The proximate reason for this difference lies in the sand-eels caught by Coquet Island terns being larger (4-8 cm) than those caught in Shetland (<4 cm). Although Shetland Arctic Terns actually caught a greater number of sand-eels than their southern counterparts, the difference was not sufficient to compensate. As a result, the adult terns were lighter during the early breeding season, and most of the chicks died within one week of hatching.

It is not known whether the ultimate cause lies in a change in sand-eel behaviour or in a reduction in their population level. It is possible that sand-eels no longer come to the surface of Shetland waters or do not come inshore as they did in the past. Alternatively, the timing of the sand-eel breeding cycle may have changed, so that their young are too small during the Arctic Tern breeding season. The sand-eel population may, however, simply be smaller than previously owing to, for example, overfishing (as predicted by Bob Furness, see *Brit. Birds* 81: 84), disease or pollution.

Other species which feed on sand-eels have been similarly affected, with **Red-throated Divers** *Gavia stellata*, **Kittiwakes** *Rissa tridactyla*, **Puffins** *Fratercula arctica* and the parasitic **Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus* faring particularly poorly. By contrast, species with more catholic tastes, such as **Gannet** *Sula bassana*, **Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo* and **Shag** *P. aristotelis*, have all had normal breeding success in Shetland this year.

#### Divers to wildfowl

A **Great Northern Diver** *Gavia immer* was an unseasonal arrival off Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire) on 2nd, and 16 **Red-necked Grebes** *Podiceps grisegena* in summer plumage was a notable concentration in Gosford Bay (Lothian) on 31st.

Several **Cory's Shearwaters** *Calonectris diomedea* were present in the North Sea: one was seen at Covehithe (Suffolk) on 4th, further singles being at Seaton Sluice (Northumberland) and Spurn Point (Humbly Grove) on 15th, with three more at Spurn on 29th. A **Great Shearwater** *Puffinus gravis* was noted at Brandon Point (Co. Kerry) on 23rd, and **Manx Shearwaters** *P. puffinus* were seen inshore in hundreds, including 308 on 29th in the Bristol Channel off Avon. A **Storm Petrel** *Hydrobates pelagicus* was also noted off Avon on 30th, and one was lured into a net using a taped call at Barns Ness (Lothian) on 24th. An immature **Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*, the first for the

reserve, flew in off the sea at Minsmere (Suffolk) on 20th, a **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* stayed at Saltash (Cornwall) from 24th, and **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* were reported from Sandwich (Kent) on 2nd and from Arne (Dorset) on 16th. A **White Stork** *C. ciconia* was reported from Olney (Buckinghamshire).

At Fen Drayton Gravel-pits, **Egyptian Geese** *Alopochen aegyptiacus* were noted breeding in Cambridgeshire for the first time; a female **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* mated with a drake Shoveler *A. clypeata* produced four young, which, together with the three young from a **Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula* × drake **Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina* pairing, may provide some future identification problems. A female Red-crested Pochard was present at Clifford Hill Gravel-pits in adjacent Northamptonshire from 17th to 25th. A female **King Eider** *Somateria spectabilis* was a difficult find in Aberlady Bay (Lothian) from 13th.

### Birds of prey

Single **Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* were present on Fair Isle (Shetland) between 4th and 10th, in Orkney between 7th and 22nd, at The Lodge, Sandy (Bedfordshire), on 12th, on the Ouse Washes (Cambridgeshire) on 20th and at Pitsford Reservoir (Northamptonshire) on 22nd. In the Lake District (Cumbria), England's **Golden Eagles** *Aquila chrysaetos* produced one fledged youngster by 26th, and the Loch Garten **Ospreys** *Pandion haliaetus* were successful after recent disappointments, with three fledglings leaving that historic nest. At Spurn Point, 11 **Kestrels** *Falco tinnunculus* was the day's tally on 30th, and at Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire) the fourth record of **Red-footed Falcon** *F. vespertinus* for the observatory came on 17th, and on 26th another was sadly picked up with a broken wing near Sandwich Bay (Kent).

### Wading birds

With the water levels high after excessive rainfall, wader numbers at inland waters were low. A **Crane** *Grus grus* was still present on Orkney on 17th, and a **Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oedipnemos* was an unusual visitor to Gibraltar Point on 16th. **Kentish Plovers** *Charadrius alexandrinus* were found at Breydon Water (Norfolk) and at Dungeness (Kent) on 20th, and reports of rarer plovers included a **Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* at Walney Island (Cumbria) from 22nd (plates 317 & 320), this year's second sighting of a **Caspian Plover** *C. asiaticus*, at Aberlady Bay (Lothian) on 12th and 13th, and a **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* at Tacumshin (Co. Wexford) during 15th to 17th. The most noticeable return migrant wader was the **Knot** *Calidris canutus*: flocks of up to a few hundred were noted passing through Shetland, Fair Isle, Filey Brigg and Spurn Point at the end of the month, with the high-tide roost at Gibraltar Point on 31st holding an impressive 8,000. The few



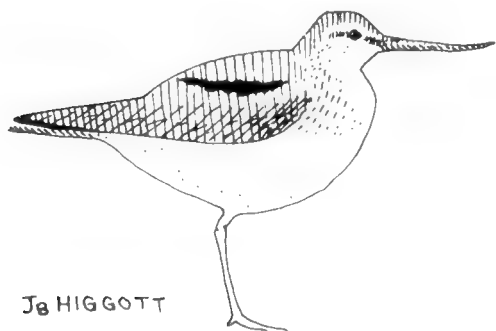
**Temminck's Stints** *C. temminckii* reported were seen at Dungeness, in Shetland, and on Old Hall Marshes (Essex), and a moulting adult **Least Sandpiper** *C. minutilla* was at Middleton Moor (Derbyshire) from 17th to 19th. Other Nearctic species seen included **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos* at Tacumshin from 9th to 11th, at Titchwell (Norfolk) on 25th, and at Minsmere from 29th, and a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* at Welney (Cambridgeshire) on 21st. Early North European returning migrants included four **Purple Sandpipers** *Calidris maritima* at Groomsport (Co. Down),



and 16 on Fair Isle on 28th. **Broad-billed Sandpipers** *Limicola falcinellus* were at Speymouth (Grampian) on 11th, and at Blacktoft (Humberside) from 15th to 20th. Flocks of **Whimbrels** *Numenius phaeopus* passed down the east coast of Britain, with 179 on 30th being the peak number at Filey Brigg. A few **Spotted Redshanks** *Tringa erythropus* and **Grey Phalaropes** *Phalaropus fulicarius* (plate 318) were noted, and a **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* appeared at Stanpit (Dorset) on 17th (plate 321).

### Skuas to terns

Their breeding failure may have resulted in the early movement of 12 **Arctic Skuas** off Spurn on 15th, with smaller numbers seen elsewhere. Five **Pomarine Skuas** *Stercorarius pomarinus* were also seen off Spurn Point



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between 16th and 24th. Individual **Mediterranean Gulls** *Larus melanocephalus* were reported at inland roosts. A **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* paused briefly at Minsmere on 29th, but a **Bridled Tern** *S. anaethetus* found at Cemlyn Bay, Anglesey (Gwynedd), on 2nd (plate 316) delighted the crowds for several days. Another was found on Coquet Island on 11th and was seen on 12th at Hauxley Pool (Northumberland). A **Sooty Tern** *S. fuscata* was reported from the nearby Farne Islands on 8th. The multiple occurrences in June and July 1984 of these two species also took place after unsettled westerly weather. A total of 35 **Little Terns** *S. albifrons* had collected at Gibraltar Point by 16th and there were 104 at Spurn Point by 21st. Apart from one **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* at Sizewell (Suffolk) on 8th, three other sightings were all in the Chichester (West Sussex) area between 14th and 31st.

#### Owls to passerines

**Long-eared Owls** *Asio otus* were found at Gullane Point (Lothian) on 7th and Spurn Point on 12th; and there were also scattered records of **Short-eared Owls** *A. flammeus* on the North Sea coast after some indication of a good breeding season. Passage of **Swifts** *Apus apus* was reported as poor at Spurn Point; but 5,000 at Gibraltar Point on 11th was notable, as were 3,500 over Cambridgeshire on 10th. **Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster* were exciting visitors to Prawle Point (Devon) on 11th and to Reydon (Suffolk) from 12th to 16th. **Sand Martins** *Riparia riparia* were in notable concentrations, with a maximum count of 2,100 at Sandwich Bay on 24th, 3,000 at Tacumshin on 14th, and the roost at Blacktoft reached 4,000 by the end of the month; hundreds were also noted passing through Spurn Point, with 600 on 31st. A **Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* at Beachy Head (East Sussex) on 9th is poten-



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tially the second record for Britain and Ireland, following the report of one in Cornwall in June; and a **Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* (plate 319) visited Dorset. Passerine migrants were scarce; **Marsh Warblers** *Acrocephalus palustris* were found at Filey Brigg on 6th and 7th and on Fair Isle on 16th; three **Wood Warblers** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* were seen at Spurn Point on 31st, and another three on the same day at Sandwich Bay; **Red-backed Shrikes** *Lanius collurio* reached Tynninghame (Lothian) on 2nd and Orkney on 12th, and a **Woodchat Shrike** *L. senator* was present in Shetland from 3rd. A **Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephala* was the next rarity offering from North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 30th, after the **Pallas's Rosefinch** *Carpodacus roseus* disappeared by mid month. A few small flocks of **Crossbills** *Loxia curvirostra* were noted in Shetland, in Orkney and on Handa Island (Highland), and others were seen away from their normal breeding areas, indicating some dispersal from Europe.



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316. Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* and Arctic Terns *S. paradisaea*, Gwynedd, July 1988 (Steve Young)



317. Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* and Ringed Plovers *C. hiaticula*, Cumbria, July 1988 (Tim Dean)

318. Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*, Dorset, July 1988 (Martin Reid)







319. Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*, Dorset, July 1988 (Peter Boardman)



320. Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*, Cumbria, July 1988 (Steve Young)



321. Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* and Dunlins *Calidris alpina*, Dorset, July 1988 (Peter Boardman)

## Recent reports

Compiled by Mark Boyd

• This summary covers the period 19th September to 16th October.  
These are unchecked reports, not accepted records.

**Herald Petrel** *Pterodroma arminjoniana* Pendeen (Cornwall), 28th September.

**Leach's Petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* (and also **Sabine's Gull** *Larus sabini* and **Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus*) widespread in coastal areas, 6th-11th October.

**Oriental Pratincole** *Glareola maldivarum* Elmley (Kent), 2nd-5th October.

**Pomarine Skua** *S. pomarina* High numbers British east coast and Western Ireland, e.g. 204 at Bridge

of Ross (Co. Clare) and 194 at Rocky Point (Co. Donegal) on 7th October.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** *Sphyrapicus varius* Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), 16th October.

**Blyth's Pipit** *Anthus godlewskii* Fair Isle (Shetland), 15th-16th October.

**Olive-backed Pipit** *A. hodgsoni* Fair Isle, 7th October, 11th, 15th; Stiffkey (Norfolk), 13th; Sandwich Bay (Kent), 16th.

**Pechora Pipit** *A. gustavi* Fair Isle, 7th October.

**Buff-bellied Pipit** *A. rubescens* St Mary's (Scilly), 9th-16th October.

**Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* St Mary's (Scilly), 2nd-3rd October.

**Pied Wheatear** *O. pleschanka* Cley (Norfolk), 16th October; Stronsay (Orkney), 16th.

**Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola* Fair Isle, 6th October, 9th, 12th.

**Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* Sands Cove, Toe Head (Co. Cork), 9th October.

**Pallas's Warbler** *Phylloscopus proregulus* St Mary's (Tyne & Wear), 12th October; Howth Head (Co. Dublin), 14th; Spurn (Humberside), 16th.

**Radde's Warbler** *P. schwarzi* Hartlepool (Cleveland), 12th October; Stronsay, 13th; Howth Head, 14th; Prior's Park (Tyne & Wear), 15th; St Abbs (Borders), 15th; Spurn, 16th; Blakeney Point (Norfolk), 16th.

**Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* Durlstone

Country Park (Dorset), 13th-16th October; Spurn, 15th-16th; Sandwich Bay, 16th.

**Red-eyed Vireo** *Vireo olivaceus* Cape Clear Island, two, 28th September; Lowestoft (Suffolk), 29th; Porthgwarra (Cornwall), 30th; St Mary's (Scilly), two, 10th-11th October, one to 16th; Holy Island (Northumberland), 6th.

**Northern Parula** *Parula americana* Portland (Dorset), 2nd-7th October; Cott Valley, St Just (Cornwall), 9th-15th.

**Blackburnian Warbler** *Dendroica fusca* Fair Isle, 7th October.

**Blackpoll Warbler** *D. striata* Porthgwarra, 14th October.

**Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* Cape Clear Island, 14th October.

**Northern Oriole** *Icterus galbula* Benbecula (Western Isles), 26th September; St Agnes (Scilly), early October to at least 12th.

## Monthly marathon

It would be unfair to penalise those competitors whose postcards have been delayed by the British postal strike, or those who were unable to send their entries at all because of blocked post-boxes. We are, therefore, extending the deadline from 15th September to 15th October, and shall give the results for both the first and second photographs in this third competition (plates 200 & 215) next month. The fourth photograph is shown below.

**322.** Third 'Monthly marathon' competition. Photograph number 4. Identify the species. Read the rules on page 49 in the January 1988 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th December 1988.

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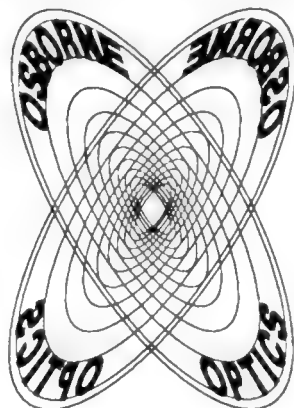
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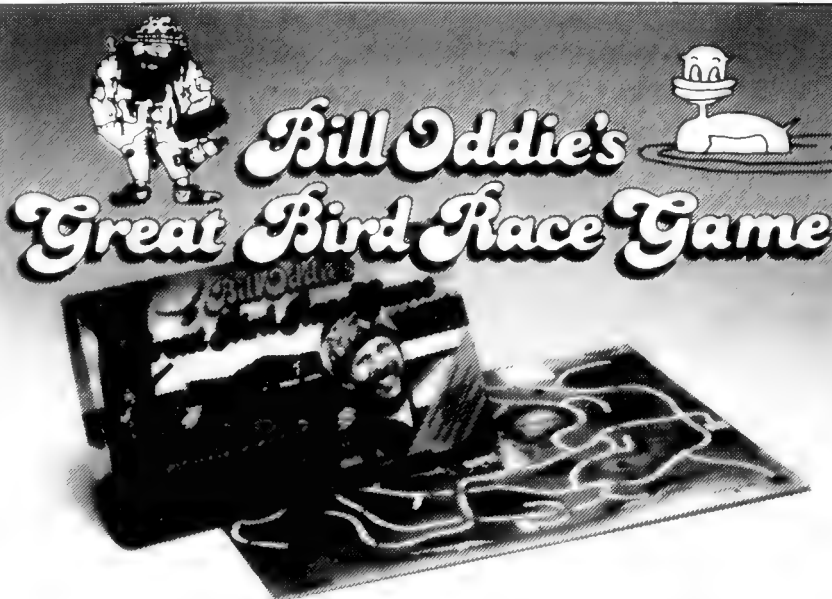
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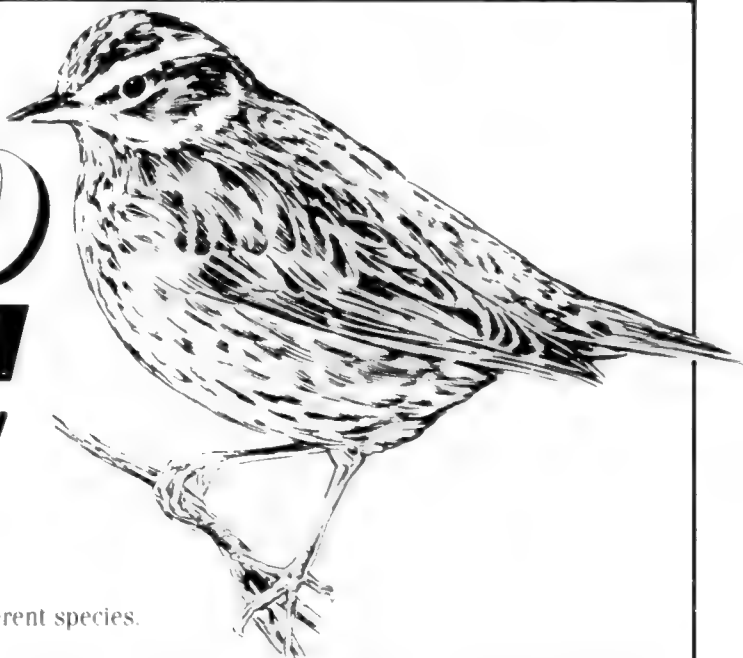
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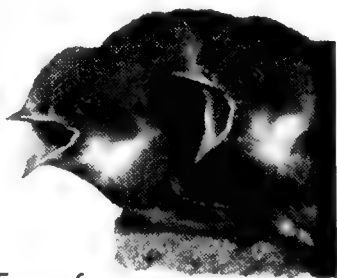
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# British Birds

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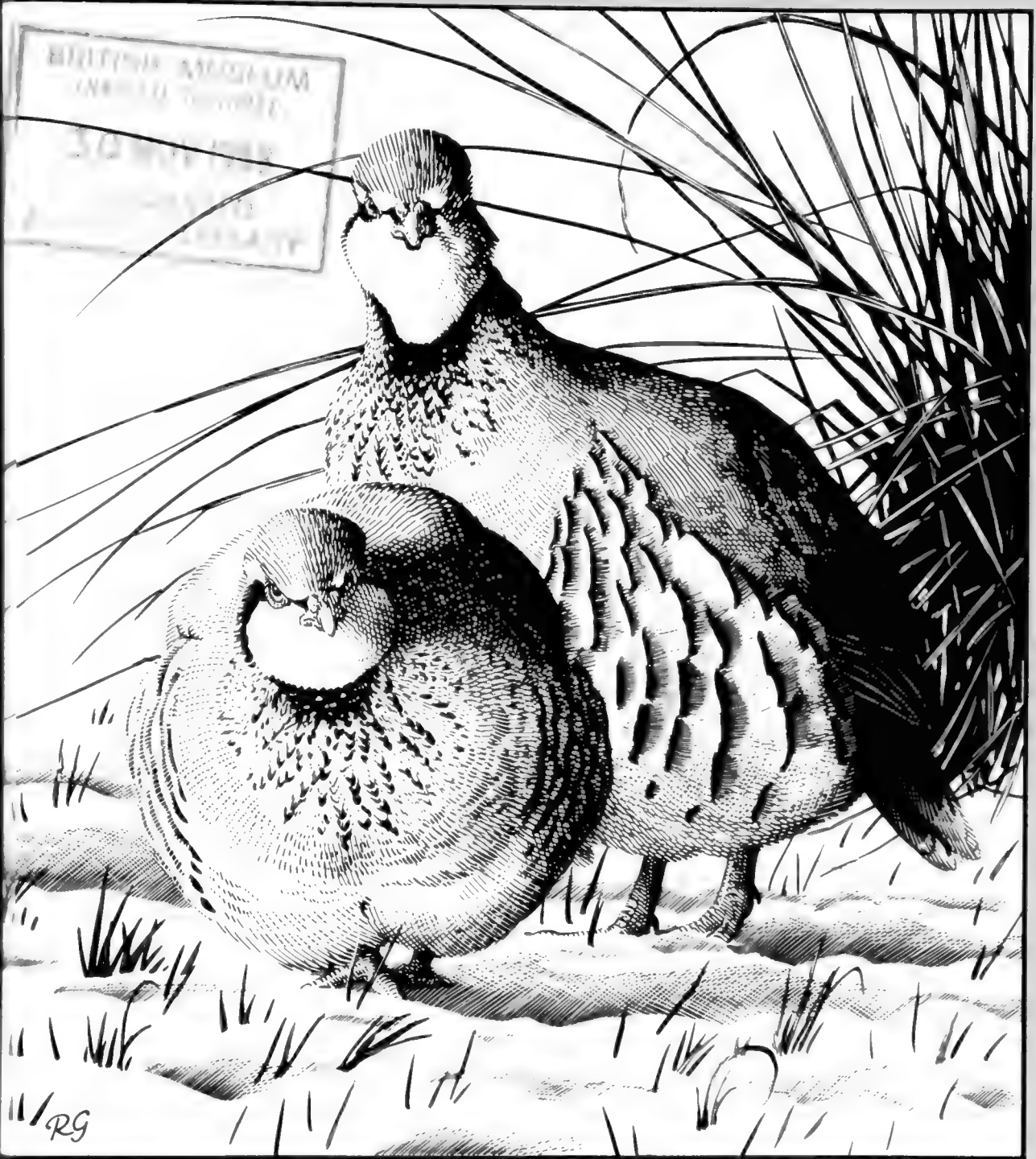
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# British Birds

Volume 81 Number 12 December 1988



**The bird population of Great Britain**  
**Co-operative breeding by Long-tailed Tits**  
**Birdcraft: trail-walking**

**Mystery photographs · Notes · Letters · August reports**  
**Monthly marathon · Reviews · Diary dates · News and comment**  
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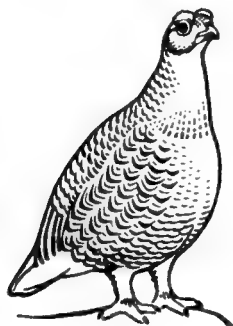
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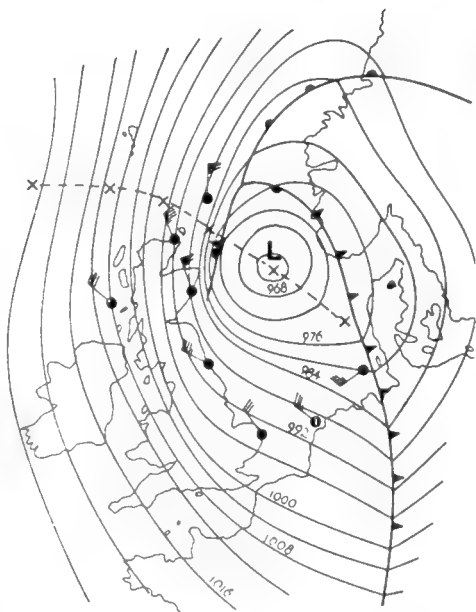
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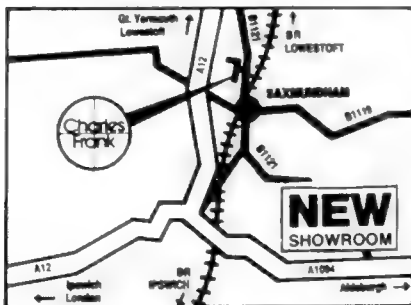
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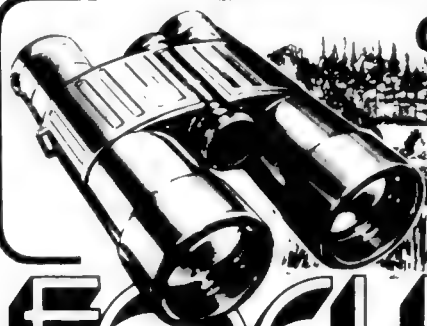
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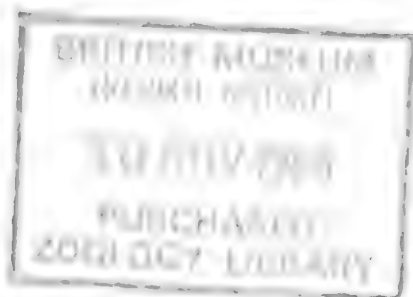
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# British Birds

VOLUME 81 NUMBER 12 DECEMBER 1988



## The bird population of Great Britain



*E. M. Nicholson*

**I**nterest in the size, composition and distribution of the bird population of Great Britain has greatly expanded during the present century, and has stimulated numerous and varied field surveys, some on a national scale. Others will no doubt follow. I have been personally active in some of these since the mid 1920s. Having recently worked on a critical review of them (for a paper read to the 1937 Bird Club on 20th January 1988), I offer the following observations with the aim of providing a historical framework, clarifying the relationships of the different approaches and methods employed, and calling attention to certain factors tending to limit the usefulness of results and their comparability for general purposes.

While valuable isolated or localised initiatives were made earlier, the first comprehensive national treatment of the changes in British bird population was contained in my 'The balance of birds'. This first appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine* in May 1924, but was rewritten at much greater length to form two chapters making 85 pages in my *Birds in England* (1926). The theme of these was that 'For birds the state of the land is a matter of vital importance, and whatever change takes place in it will immediately be reflected among them.' Accordingly, I emphasised the frequency and significance of changes in status, and the lesser part played by human direct measures, as compared with indirect effects, especially on the extent and nature of habitats.

In Part I, I reviewed the record since the sixteenth century of some 15 species which had become extinct and some 17 which had become established in Great Britain, including three classed as first lost and then regained. In Part II, I reviewed major increases and decreases of all other species. I found that 63 had increased, in 16 cases through spread of civilisation, and in others through cultivation and enclosure, gamekeeping and fishing influences, protection and removal of natural enemies, plantations, and a few from obscure causes. On the other hand, 58 species had decreased, during the longer term.

On this basis, I asserted that 'the numerical bird population of this country is infinitely greater than it was in the Middle Ages.' Apart from the fact that there was at the time an almost total lack of statistical data to justify such a statement, it must now in any case be regarded as exaggerated, taking into account what we know of medieval land use, although a fairly substantial increase still seems probable.

During the ensuing years, vigorous action was taken to find out more about the British bird population through national censuses of the Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* and the Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, regional censuses of the Rook *Corvus frugilegus* and the Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*, samples on farmland by the Oxford Bird Census and in woodland and urban parkland by the present author, and a series of transects across various habitats. On this basis, I was invited by the Editor of the *Daily Mail* to produce a summary of the scale and composition of the bird population; it was published on 29th September 1932.

Although entitled by the Editor 'Britain's Eighty Million Birds', this estimate was in fact in breeding pairs (some 40 million) for England and Wales only. The results were interesting enough, showing the Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* and Blackbird *Turdus merula* in the lead with more than 5 million pairs each, followed by the Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* and Robin *Erithacus rubecula* each with over 2 million, while altogether 30 species, including House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, were named as having 100,000 or more pairs, and only another 40 species ranked as possibly exceeding 50,000.

Ornithologically, however, equal interest attaches to the basis of calculation, which was outlined in the article and is traceable in more detail from the nine pages of typed or pencilled working notes which





323. Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Somerset, February 1982 (*David Tomlinson*)

have fortunately been preserved. These show that highest recorded densities for species, and maxima for distinct habitats, were applied to a breakdown of habitats based on the agricultural land-use statistics. These were reduced to a common measure of breeding pairs per 100,000 acres (40,470 ha), and grouped by habitats in terms of high, medium, and low density in an average summer. By this means, it was possible to arrive at figures for all species on each habitat type, as well as for each individual species, either on sample censused habitats or counted separately over wider areas.

Already, comparisons between different samples were enabling upper and lower limits of density to be estimated for each species. Considering the paucity of data and the novelty of the whole concept, the exercise represented a remarkable leap from almost total ignorance to a quite sophisticated national estimate. It was cautiously described, however, as guessing reasonably closely, rather than as a set of reliable figures.

This publication led to an insistent demand for a comparable Scottish exercise, which appeared in *The Sunday Post* on 20th November 1932, hedged around with even stronger cautions. It suggested a total, at May level in an average year, of below 10 million breeding pairs, the only species credited with more than 750,000 being the Chaffinch,



324. Male Blackbird *Turdus merula*, Surrey, May 1986 (Peter Gasson)

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*, Starling, Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* and possibly the Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*. The group between 100,000 and 250,000 pairs included seven seabirds—the four commonest gulls *Larus* and the Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*, Guillemot *Uria aalge* and Puffin *Fratercula arctica*—none of which figures in the list for England and Wales. It was noted on the working sheets that (even excluding lowland moors) more than half the area of Scotland consisted of low-density rough grazing and deer forest. Unpublished papers from a 1934 follow-up show that, by then, comparative densities had been examined for sample habitats in England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Germany, Greenland and northeastern USA.

Others were now entering the field. In 1939, James Fisher, in his *Birds as Animals*, reviewed a number of census results, relying partly on David Lack's 1937 *Ibis* 'Review of bird census work and bird population problems'. Fisher ventured a guess that the total for Great Britain must be 'about 100,000,000 land birds'. Not long afterwards, he picked up my 1932 estimates for England and Wales, but still not those for Scotland. In his *Watching Birds* (1941), he commented on the close agreement between our figures, using my species estimates for England and Wales, while revising his total to 120,000,000 landbirds.

While these are his first published references, a copy in my possession of a letter which I wrote to Julian Huxley of 17th February 1933 shows that he had passed to me for comment some kind of population list from Fisher, which I presumably returned without making a copy. I responded with a number of detailed figures, putting the Chaffinch, Blackbird,

Starling and Robin in a top group with 2-7 million pairs each, and the House Sparrow, Dunnock *Prunella modularis*, Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* and Meadow Pipit next with 1-2 million pairs, followed by the Rook, Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*, Wren, Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* and Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus* at between 500,000 and 1 million. These broadly coincided with my 1932 estimates, but I now gave the total as 'in the neighbourhood of 40-50,000,000 pairs at May level', rather than as 'probably somewhere about 40,000,000' as in 1932. I emphasised the difficulties due to absolute and relative abundance varying enormously from region to region and place to place, and also to a considerable variation in time; for example, although there were only 3,900 breeding pairs of Grey Herons by May, the summer population, including young, would be of the order of 20,000.

It thus appears that Fisher was already interested in the subject six years before *Birds as Animals* appeared, although, oddly enough so far as I can recall, he never consulted me about it, despite our being in close touch over the British Trust for Ornithology then. It is, nevertheless, most likely that Julian Huxley had passed on to him my 1933 comments; perhaps more light may be thrown on this by reference to his or Julian Huxley's papers.

Be that as it may, his most important contribution to the literature came some 20 years later in his little-known Presidential Address of April 1952 to the South-East Union of Scientific Societies on the breeding population of inland birds in England and Wales. In this, he based himself expressly on my 1932 estimates, which, he said, 'no subsequent work has importantly modified and much subsequent work has closely confirmed.' He complained, however, 'that the study of comparative populations of breeding inland birds in Britain appears suddenly to have ceased ten years ago.' In his classes at above the 1 million birds level, he included the same 12 species as my 1933 list above, but, without explanation, he substituted a total of 63 million birds for his previous (Great Britain) totals of 100-200 millions. That implies a Scottish total of 37-57 millions, which is hardly credible (as seabirds are excluded) and conflicts massively with my 1932 figure of under 20 million. The mystery is increased by his failure to mention, let alone review or revise, his earlier Great Britain figures, or to consider possible changes during the previous 20 years.

He stated disarmingly, however, that, insofar as this paper contributed anything new to the study of our landbird population in England and Wales, it was on those 'intermediate' species 'the number of whose individuals lies between a hundred or a hundred thousand, or in the logarithmic classes V (10,000 to 1 million); IV (1,000 to 10,000) and III (100 to 1,000)'. He quickly added that his attempts to sort the species in these categories, which he believed to number 96, were based on what was frankly in some cases guesswork.

This appears to be the first presentation of British bird population on a logarithmic basis, which has most recently been repeated by Ferguson-Lees *et al.* (1983). This system serves well enough in the lower ranges, up to 100,000, but becomes increasingly crude and unsatisfactory for the

most common species, where species up to 9 million apart are bracketed in the same class, thus aggravating the tendency to neglect tackling more accurately how many of each there actually are.

Here we are up against the major differences in the basis of national estimates which have continued and indeed grown more serious ever since. These differences relate partly to a choice between breeding pairs and individual birds; partly to the expansion from England and Wales to Great Britain and then to Great Britain and Ireland; partly to degree of reliance on full census as against sampling, or the non-statistical

325. Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs* at nest, West Sussex, June 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 78: plate 92) (Roger Wilmshurst)



judgments of experienced observers as to relative populations and their changes; and partly, on the margin, to distinctions between land or inland and coastal or sea birds. (We are concerned here simply with the breeding season; winter wildfowl counts and other winter surveys are not considered.)

In order that the implications of these differences may be borne in mind in what follows, brief comments on each are called for here. The advantage of working in terms of *breeding pairs* is to relate to the continuing baseline for a country's bird population, excluding such factors as passage movements, emigration and non-breeding birds, which would complicate counting or estimating, and would place obstacles to certain important uses of the data. The disadvantage is that such a basis is inconsistent with most demographic statistics, including human ones, and that it omits an unspecified and at least locally substantial element of non-breeders in the total breeding-season population, thus obscuring calculations for biomass and carrying capacity. As the breeding season progresses, the also-omitted population of juveniles increasingly distorts the picture. Despite all these complications, which appear not to have been objectively and comprehensively reviewed, general practice has remained attached to breeding pairs as a basis, and few except Ferguson-Lees *et al.* (1983) have followed James Fisher's alternative of using individual birds.

Nor has practice followed my 1932 basis of treating Scotland separately from England and Wales, nor James Fisher's shift (except in 1952) to a single Great Britain unit; recent studies have been in terms of the whole zoogeographical province of Britain and Ireland. While there are clear arguments in favour of this, it involves problems which seem not to have been sufficiently faced. Historically, it puts a barrier on comparisons over the past half-century, which is the more serious owing to the absence in important cases of a breakdown between totals for Ireland and Great Britain, or even within Great Britain between Scotland, England and Wales. This lack is the more serious because each of these components differs greatly in the ratios of habitats of which it consists, as well as in the extent and thoroughness of data gathering which has hitherto proved practicable, and in the availability and comparability of data on land use and other relevant factors. This aspect surely deserves more serious attention if all the work done is to be fully applicable.

Concerning the third main point of difference, which has existed since my 1932 population estimates by current numbers diverged from my 1926 review of described trends over time, the problems are more inherent and less related to arbitrary decisions. Historically, and for many purposes even currently, the recorded judgments and impressions of competent observers form a data bank the importance of which has continued to be recognised since 'The balance of birds'.

Notable updatings have been provided by W. B. Alexander and David Lack's comprehensive treatment, spread over three issues of *British Birds* in 1944, and by John Parslow's much fuller treatment, initiated by *British Birds* with a grant from the Nature Conservancy, under the supervision of David Lack, in 1964. This aimed, through thorough review of the much

expanded literature, to record changes in status and distribution of breeding birds in Great Britain and Ireland during the present century, to relate them to changes in other parts of the range of the species, and to discuss possible reasons for any decline or increase. The results appeared in *British Birds* during 1967-68, and were later revised and updated in book form (Parslow 1973). While available numerical data were quoted, they comprised only a secondary part of the exercise, which was unrelated to any particular point in time, and was focused on changes in status and distribution, especially those since 1940. A detailed breakdown by species and decades has since been provided by Sharrock (1974), while a more summary review is included in Nicholson (1984).

As numerical data expand, they will doubtless play a larger part in future follow-ups which may be anticipated, but inherently this approach is complementary to that of the census or atlas survey of distribution. It is also complemented by the now much expanded and systematised regular sampling provided by the BTO's Common Birds Census and Waterways Survey.

Little needs be said about the distinctions between land and sea or coastal and inland populations, since these were a temporary by-product of gaps in knowledge and difficulties of coverage which have since been overcome (see Cramp *et al.* 1974), although they still need to be taken into account historically.

Summing up this part of the review, the immense additions to our knowledge since 1926 have been gained by employing a variety of techniques organised within different frameworks, which, with all their benefits, have placed some often unnoticed constraints on comparing and applying important parts of the data. After 60 years, we should be in a position to review the opportunities and needs for certain improvements before the next round of surveys comes up.

Turning now to the use of what we have so far learnt, the natural starting point is our picture of the bird population of Great Britain as it has changed and as it has become better known, especially through the second and third quarters of this century. Beginning with gross breeding totals, and with the figures at their face value, omitting Ireland, we start in 1932 with approximately 50 million pairs, from my own estimates that year, and proceed to some 64 million pairs at 1940, taking James Fisher's revised estimates and adding (in the light of modern knowledge) a further 4 million to compensate for his omission of seabirds. Evidently, these estimates cannot both be right, even if one of them is, and the difficulty is aggravated by Fisher's arbitrary and unexplained substitution in 1952 of 63 million birds as the then total for England and Wales (see above). It is just conceivable that the true figure may have increased in the better part of a decade by somewhere near 10%, but even that would leave a discrepancy of some 9 million pairs to be imputed to wrong estimation.

During those years, our knowledge of British bird population certainly made great strides, and, although James Fisher does not specify the 'latest information available' supporting his revision from 100 million to 120 million individuals between 1939 and 1940, he does provide a breakdown



of habitat areas and populations which might enable a sophisticated comparison to be made. As he credits 48½ million of his 120 million birds to a combination of permanent grass, rough grazing and deer forest, at a density ranging from 7 to 20 birds per 10 acres (per 4 ha), and as my workings suggest no great difference in our breakdown of habitat areas, it seems to me that much of the discrepancy must arise from differences in the reliability of assessing densities.

For instance, I assessed Scottish rough grazing plus deer forests at 1 bird per 2 acres as a 'very ample allowance', whereas he assumed 7 per 10 acres for these. That alone makes a difference of nearly 4 million birds between us, little if any of which can be ascribed to any actual change in numbers. On permanent pasture, there seems also to be a big difference, since he credits it with 2 birds per acre, averaged out with other farmland over Great Britain, while my assessment for Scotland is only 1 bird per acre, and for England and Wales it falls in a group averaging 1½ per acre. That could make a difference of more than 7 million birds at the extreme. It is possible that detailed critical scrutiny of the workings could at least narrow down such discrepancies in the light of fuller knowledge, making allowance for the inherent difference due to his presumed inclusion of non-breeders, which would be left out of account in my figures, and might conceivably exceed 5 million birds, at a wild guess.

Pending such critical scrutiny, I am inclined to consider that the true breeding bird population of Great Britain in the 1930s must have been between 50 and 60 million pairs, and probably lay nearer the lower of these figures. Although inconsistent with James Fisher's rather wild and unsupported 1939 and 1940 totals, this matches better with his more considered 1952 figure of 63 million birds for England and Wales. I would hope, however, that the surviving material will be so well studied that this will not be the last word on the matter.

In seeking a comparison with the bird population of Great Britain nearer the present day, we are badly handicapped by the lack of a breakdown between Great Britain and Ireland. To divide the total *pro rata* according to area could plainly not be justified. In 1932, after critical comparison, I came out with an average density for Scotland that was only half that for England and Wales, and, pending the much-needed detailed breakdown, I am inclined to apply a similar adjustment for Ireland.

The Great Britain comparison on that basis would be between say 55 million pairs in 1932 and some 63-75 million pairs in the early 1970s. Is such an increase credible, bearing in mind that climatically these latter were undoubtedly years of higher-than-average bird population, and that, during the 40 years in question, land use had shifted significantly towards those types carrying higher bird densities? I must leave others to determine this question in the light of fuller scrutiny of all the evidence, but I do not myself regard a real increase within this period of the 8 million pairs implied by the lower figure as inconceivable. Credibility would, however, be strained by anything approaching the higher end of the range, derived from the assessments by Ferguson-Lees *et al.* (1983) and by Sharrock (1976).





326. Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, Surrey, November 1974 (RSPB & Michael W. Richards)

While species which lend themselves readily to counting have mostly been surveyed, either nationally or over large areas, most of the commonest species present serious problems, although the majority have recently been covered on a widespread sample basis by the BTO Common Birds Census. There is some reason to believe that several have recently gained significantly in numbers, with the exception of the Song Thrush, which has suffered a considerable decline, aggravated at intervals by effects of hard winters, and also the House Sparrow, at least in parts of its range. In 1932, both these were estimated at 1.25-2.75 million pairs for Great Britain, while an adjusted total for Britain for the 1970s might be up to 2½ million pairs for the Song Thrush, and somewhat higher for the House Sparrow. In 1932, the Chaffinch ranked first, with probably at least 6 million pairs, and the Blackbird second, with at least 5.25 million, followed by the Starling, with between 2.75 and around 6 million, and the Robin, with up to 5.75 million. The Meadow Pipit followed these, at probably 2-3 million, and the Dunnock came close behind with 1.25-2.75 million. The only other species estimated at above 1 million was the Rook. Between 1932 and the 1970s, the Wren seems to have moved up to top place, with probably over 7 million pairs in Great Britain, followed by the Blackbird with over 5 million and the Robin with probably at least 4 million. The Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*, which rightly or wrongly was placed well below 1 million in 1932, is now rated at some 4 million, and this, like the relatively even greater expansion of the Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* to

above the million mark, may well reflect a major genuine increase. Considering that the top eight species account for around half of the total bird population, it is regrettable that we are not yet in a position to assess more precisely their total numbers and their changes in fortune. So far as can be judged, apart from sudden setbacks from hard winters, the members of this group of super-abundant species maintain fairly stable populations, and are not subject to crashes or major explosions, even though in absolute terms their fluctuations may be fairly substantial. It appears that the summer migrants have failed to hold their own recently in the top and middle ranks, with the exception of the Willow Warbler, which continues to be highly rated. Among the species whose numbers remain least certain are the more specialist woodland birds, and seabirds breeding in large and perhaps fluctuating remote colonies. Even reliable approximate census totals for every species would, however, be of limited application in themselves. For practical purposes, they would need to be related to land-use maps and breakdowns by categories. Those in turn would have to be reconciled with habitat types carrying varying densities of bird population by species. An approach to a basis for such an exercise is provided by the Land Utilisation Survey and by the guidelines contained in the 'Habitat' section of *Birds of the West Palearctic*, as well as in R. J. Fuller's *Bird Habitats in Britain* (1982).

Among the practical applications of data about bird numbers, conservation ranks high, and there is no doubt that ability to testify to changing status of species is a major factor in arguing for threatened habitats or in promoting public interest and support for nature. Whereas much of the other evidence thus deployed may be challenged or even confuted, it is notable that data about bird populations are normally regarded as irrefutable facts of obvious significance in public inquiries and similar investigations, apart from their scientific value. It is important that this status shall be maintained.

Perhaps the least appreciated aspect of the build-up of data about bird populations is their potential for forecasting. In order to realise this, we need to develop a clearer appreciation of norms in respect of increases, decreases or fluctuations, of the conditions and consequences of adaptation to fresh habitats or climatic change, and of the effects of competition and stress, including disturbance, pollution and spread of pests and parasites. Although it is now a quarter of a century since the Parslow exercise was set in train to enhance our capacity, among other things, for tracing the causes of increases or decreases, that capacity remains disappointingly limited. Sometimes this may be because the facts about changes in numbers are not clearly traced; and sometimes be on account of a failure to focus research on the possible causes, and to go on eliminating those which do not survive investigation until the real cause is identified. But may it not also be true that failures to focus and co-ordinate what we know are partly responsible?

The study of British bird populations has been a success story, and is continuing to be one, but the time has surely come to look at it carefully, and to recognise how the success can be enhanced and put to better use.

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## Mystery photographs

**138** Last month's mystery bird (plate 310, repeated here) is clearly either a chat or a wheatear *Oenanthe*, but which one? At first glance, it is rather nondescript, but female and immature wheatears, which are essentially brown, were an identification problem recognised and dealt with in the paper 'Field identification of West Palearctic wheatears' (*Brit. Birds* 80: 137-157, 187-238). Most adult male wheatears can easily be eliminated by their grey upperparts, black faces or black-and-white plumage, so we are left with male or female Isabelline *O. isabellina*, and female or first-winter Northern *O. oenanthe*, Black-eared *O. hispanica*, Pied *O. pleschanka*, Eastern Pied *O. picata*, Finsch's *O. finschii*, Desert *O. deserti*, and the North African race of Mourning *O. lugens halophila*.

As well as plumage, size and structure are major considerations. The mystery wheatear is clearly of quite small build, has a small rounded head, and thin bill, its general proportions are sleek (not dumpy), and it has rather short wings (or very short primary projection) that reach to just beyond the uppertail-coverts, giving it a long-tailed appearance. All in all,



one could almost be forgiven for thinking at first sight that it is a female Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*. In fact, the very nondescript appearance is a good pointer to its identity, since most of the species mentioned above have in most plumages at least one consistent feature, either in structure or plumage, that offers an identification clue.

Female and first-winter *halophila* Mourning usually have a better-defined supercilium, dark ear-coverts (most, but not all also have a dark or blackish throat), contrasting markedly with the paler lores and sides of the neck, and, at all times, white underparts.

Female and first-winter Finsch's can be equally nondescript. Finsch's also, in most cases, lacks any well-defined supercilium, but, in common with Mourning, often has contrasting dark ear-coverts and always has white underparts, save for (on some) pale greyish streaks on the sides of the breast.

Isabelline is clearly pale, large, with upright stance, long legs, a large bill given emphasis by its broad base and, on most, a well-marked supercilium and black or dark lores. On a very few, this last feature is temporarily lacking or obscured by white tips.

We are now reduced to considering the remaining species: Northern, Black-eared, Pied and Eastern Pied. The last of these, Eastern Pied, although highly variable, has a drab appearance, and it is also slightly bigger-looking, lacking the delicate, small, chat-like appearance of our mystery bird. Female or first-winter Pied, on the other hand, is a very real possibility, as it is of slight or slender build, small and rather round-headed, and often shows little in the way of a definite supercilium. Pied is essentially earth-brown or dull brown, and most individuals also show dark brown on the chin and throat, with the belly and undertail-coverts

white or whitish. Also, being a long-distance migrant, the wings are (on average) noticeably much longer, with a greater primary projection.

The chin, throat and sides of the neck and breast on the mystery bird look relatively pale, as are those of both Black-eared and Northern. The latter, however, is of a sturdier build, has a less rounded or more gradually rounded head shape, a relatively bigger bill, dark across the lores, and a darker eye-stripe accentuating a well-defined creamy or white supercilium broadly over and behind the eye. The wings are longer than those of Black-eared, with the tips extending well down the tail, often to the black terminal band. Thus, the mystery bird can be identified as a female Black-eared Wheatear; it was photographed in Israel in March 1987 by Paul Doherty.

**CORRECTION** Plate 97 in the 'Field identification of West Palearctic wheatears' paper was wrongly named. It shows not a Black-eared Wheatear, but a female (probably adult) Northern Wheatear. As outlined above, it is of the wrong build (it is too plump or full-bodied), has a rather flatter crown, a bigger bill, a better-defined supercilium, and longer wings; a Black-eared would have looked much more refined, slimmer and compact. The error (already noted, *Brit. Birds* 80: 670) was kindly also pointed out by several correspondents, including Paul Doherty, C. D. R. Heard and Hadoram Shirihai.

The opportunity is taken, with this 'Mystery photographs' text, to include photographs of several of the confusion species mentioned above.

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328. Adult Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*, Israel, March 1987 (Paul Doherty)





329. Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*, probably adult female, Israel, March 1987  
(Paul Doherty)

330. First-winter Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, Israel, October 1987 (Paul Doherty)





331. First-winter female Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, Kenya, February 1988 (Paul Doherty)



332. Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*, probably first-winter, Israel, March 1987 (Paul Doherty)

333. Adult Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*, Israel, March 1987 (Paul Doherty)





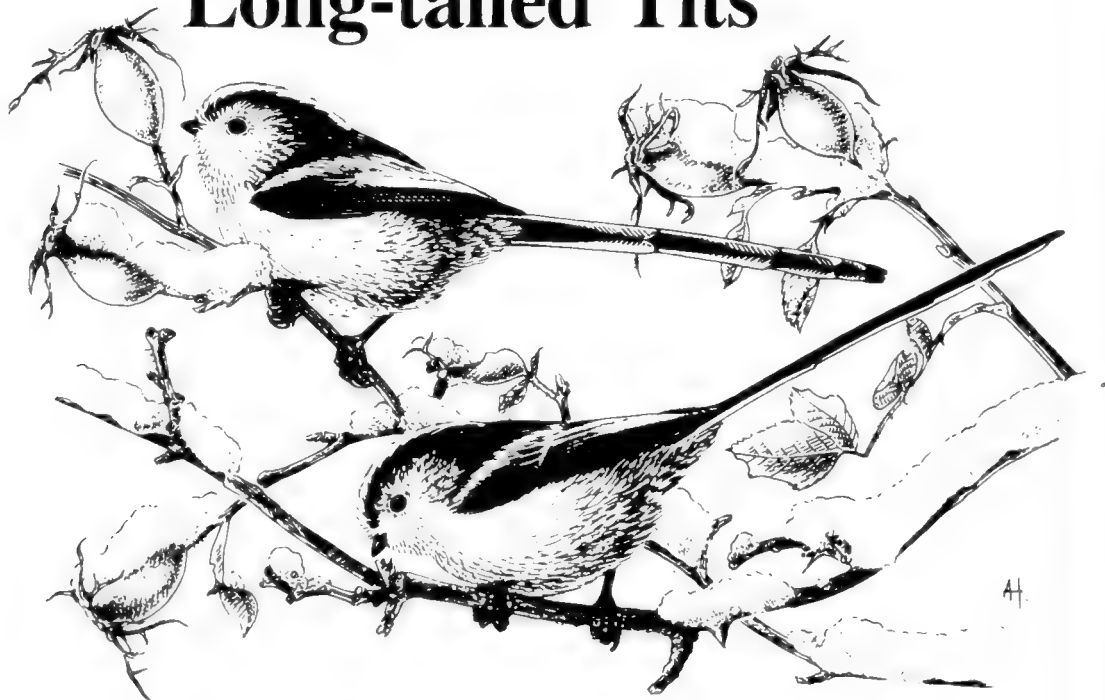


334. Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, moulting from first-winter to first-summer plumage, Israel, March 1987 (Paul Doherty)

335. Mystery photograph 139. Identify the species. Answer next month



# Co-operative breeding by Long-tailed Tits



*N. W. Glen and C. M. Perrins*

**F**or most of this century, ornithologists have tended to believe that the majority of birds breed monogamously, with either the pair or, in some species, the female alone raising the brood; to find more than a single pair at a nest was considered to be atypical. Nevertheless, a few species were known where this occurred, and one of these was the Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*; there are many early references to three or more individuals attending the young at a nest (see Lack & Lack 1958 for some of these).

During the last 15 years or so, the view that co-operative breeding was rare has been shattered by a great many studies which have shown that it is in fact widespread among birds. The 'error' seems to have arisen because the vast majority of early studies of birds took place in the north temperate region (mainly in Europe and North America), whereas the large majority of the birds that breed co-operatively occur in the tropics and in southern latitudes.

The reasons for this geographic variation have been, and still are, extensively debated. An over-simplification, certainly not tenable in all cases, runs as follows. Some bird species that breed in geographical areas where the climate is relatively equable throughout the year may occupy all the habitat available to them; there are no times of year—as there is, for example, in Britain—when life is so difficult for the birds that many die and there are vacant territories. In addition, in these species, the territory owners tend to defend their territories all the year around. When their young reach the age of independence, they face a serious problem: there is no empty area where they can settle.

As a result, the young tend to stay at home, remaining in the natal territory in some cases for several years; usually, they do not breed during this period, though they do help to defend the territory and may also help to raise their parents' young from later broods (i.e. their own brothers and sisters). Such birds are normally referred to as helpers.

'Everybody' gains from this (otherwise the habit would not have evolved). The parents gain from these activities, since larger groups can more successfully defend a territory than can smaller ones, and they get help with raising the young. The juveniles gain because their survival and chances of eventually gaining a breeding place are enhanced. There are differences between the sexes here. Presumably because of the long-term disadvantages of close inbreeding, both sexes cannot remain in the natal territory for ever; eventually (though in some cases not for a year or more), the young females tend to go into neighbouring groups and be accepted by them. The young males obtain a breeding site either by inheriting the natal one when their father dies or, if the group is sufficiently successful and grows in size, by budding off a territory with a small gang (consisting of brothers and immigrant females) from the parents' territory. If large enough, this group stands a chance of flourishing and establishing itself, especially if neighbouring groups have been less successful and are small.

There is another advantage in helping one's parents raise young. Natural selection favours animals which leave many offspring because offspring share genes with their parents; hence those animals that leave many offspring leave many copies of their own genes. But organisms also share genes with relatives other than their own offspring, and hence, if a young bird cannot itself breed, it can still ensure that some of its genes are passed on to future generations by helping to raise, for example, its brothers and sisters, or even their offspring. This is known as kin selection (Hamilton 1964; Woolfenden & Fitzpatrick 1985).

The purpose of this present paper is to describe the behaviour of the Long-tailed Tit in the context of its co-operative behaviour. It is based largely on field studies carried out in Wytham Wood near Oxford during the years 1980-83 by NWG (Glen 1985).

## **Long-tailed Tits in winter**

### *Winter flocks*

As is widely known, Long-tailed Tits live in small parties. By ringing broods together with their parents, we have been able to show that these flocks are essentially family parties, made up of a brood, its parents and any extra adults that helped to raise that brood. These flocks are fairly constant in membership (except for losses due to death) from the end of one breeding season until they start to break up at the beginning of the next one. In Wytham in the winter of 1981/82, the size of 15 flocks varied from six to 17 and averaged 10.6; while, in 1982/83, the size of 21 flocks varied from six to 14, with an average of 8.8.

Each flock maintains a winter territory. In Wytham, 15 territories averaged about 25 ha in 1981/82, and 21 territories averaged 17 ha in 1982/83. Since the territories are quite large, the birds in one flock do not

often come into contact with those in another; when they do, they defend their boundary vigorously. In each of the two years of the study, the larger the flock, the larger the area of the winter territory.

#### *Winter survival*

The reasons why Long-tailed Tits live in these communal flocks may be different from those of their tropical counterparts. Long-tailed Tits are unusually small for a bird living at this latitude, and small birds are particularly vulnerable in cold weather. The reason for this is obvious when one realises that such small birds, weighing only 6-8 g, have a body temperature of over 40°C and yet, from time to time, they have to survive night temperatures of -20°C, a feat which is an amazing advertisement for the insulating properties of feathers.



336. At least nine Long-tailed Tits *Aegithalos caudatus* roosting under eaves of house, Dumfriesshire, January 1965 (see *Brit. Birds* 71: 362) (Robert T. Smith)

Nonetheless, winter survival is often difficult for small birds, and prolonged periods of hard weather may wreak havoc with populations of Long-tailed Tits, Wrens *Troglodytes troglodytes* and Goldcrests *Regulus regulus*. For example, large declines in numbers were noticed after the hard winter of 1946/47 (Ticehurst & Hartley 1948) and after the long, cold winter of 1962/63 (Dobinson & Richards 1964); indeed, after the latter winter, Long-tailed Tits seemed to be virtually extinct in Wytham.

Some of these small birds have special ways of minimising the effect of extreme cold. Wrens (like many of the tits) roost in holes, which gives them some protection from the most severe weather; in very cold periods, they have often been reported to roost communally, so helping to keep each other warm. Long-tailed Tits do not roost in holes, but they do roost together in groups. On mild nights, they may just sit close to each other,

but not in contact; on cold nights, however, they huddle very close (plate 336). We suggest that this is not only extremely important for birds, but that it may also be the factor which has resulted in them living in parties throughout the winter. Going to roost on its own in a cold period in winter may be tantamount to suicide for a Long-tailed Tit. It may also be important for them to live in groups during the day; they are one of the very few British species that are almost entirely insectivorous even during the winter, and it may be crucial for them to defend a feeding area; certainly, they have serious-looking interactions with adjacent flocks of Long-tailed Tits on their territory boundaries.

### **Preparing for breeding**

In early spring (as early as February in a mild year), Long-tailed Tits start to prepare for breeding. The first signs of this are that they are seen moving about in twos, and not in flocks, during the day. These couples are of interest. It will be remembered that the flocks are composed primarily of family parties. Hence pairs from a winter flock would be made up mainly of brothers and sisters. In fact, at this time, there is considerable shuffling between flocks, with the females moving from the flock they lived in all winter into another. Usually this is an adjacent flock, but, obviously, those that go farther are more likely to be missed, so that it is difficult to give unbiased proportions. Hence, pairs seen in spring are made up of males from the winter flocks and females that have come into that flock area in early spring.

These pairs set up individual territories within the area occupied by the male's flock in winter. The boundaries of these do not seem to be very vigorously defended, so they are difficult to delineate. One might expect them to be more strongly defended on those sides where they coincide with the edge of the winter flock's territory, but we do not know whether this is so or not.

The pairs continue to rejoin the flock (including, now, the new females) each night and to roost communally. This goes on throughout the nest-building stage until the roof of the nest is completed, when the pair starts to roost in it. What happens to the last pair to complete a nest, or when a pair loses its nest to a predator, does not seem to be known, but there are some records of three or more Long-tailed Tits roosting in nests quite early in the season (e.g. Casement 1951); possibly these extra birds are ones which have suddenly found themselves homeless.

### **Nesting, loss of nests and helpers**

The nesting of the Long-tailed Tit has been described in some detail on a number of occasions (e.g. Lack & Lack 1958; Gaston 1973), and this aspect will not be covered in detail here, except to say that, as in previous studies, there was a high loss of nests to predators. Only some 16% of nests yielded fledged young (this does not mean that only 16% of pairs raised young: a pair might have two or more further nesting attempts if it failed the first time).

In most species of birds, if a pair loses its nest, it can either nest again or

give up breeding for that year. The Long-tailed Tit has a further choice: the failed breeders can go and help at another nest. The later in the season that they lose their nest, the more likely they are to do this.

Observations of colour-ringed individuals which had been known to be breeding produced another rather surprising fact. Virtually all those that arrived and helped at nests were known to have lost a nest of their own (and one male whose own brood had fledged three days previously helped briefly at an adjacent nest). In this study, Long-tailed Tits were found to help only at a nest that contained chicks and not at ones in an earlier stage. Failed *pairs* did not, however, go together and help at adjacent nests.

337. Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* collecting nest material, Sussex, April 1988 (Maurice K. Walker)







338. Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* with food for young, at nest, France, June 1975 (G. Olioso)

Although only 12 colour-ringed helpers, whose relationship with the nesting pair was known, were seen helping at nests, in all 12 cases the helper was related to the male parent (seven helpers were male, one female, and four unsexed). In other words, in all cases, helpers were assisting their brothers to breed. The suspicion has to be, therefore, that the failed breeders go to help relatives raise their young, not just any neighbour. The fact that more males than females were identified amongst the helpers would be expected if this were the case, since the males in adjacent nests within the same winter territory are related, whereas the females are not. In order to find a pair which included a relative, a female would have to go back to her own winter territory, as the single female identified above did. That this was not just a fluke is supported by observations of two other known females which lost nests within the area of one winter territory and were found helping at nests in different ones, although in neither of these cases were the relationships between the female helper and the pair known. In contrast, of the nine males (including the seven noted above) which, having lost nests, went to help at another, none crossed a winter territory boundary to do so.

### Effect of helpers on breeding success

The presence of helpers at nests has a number of noticeable effects on the breeding effort. If a helper joins a nest early on, the female spends a greater proportion of the day brooding the chicks than she does in the absence of a helper; as a result, her feeding rate to the chicks is markedly lower than that of a female at a comparable nest without a helper. Consequently, in the early stages, the young in nests with helpers may not benefit by receiving a greater number of feeds, though they do benefit by





339. Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* with feather for nest-lining, at nest, Grampian, April 1981 (Don Smith)

being kept warmer by the female (which results in them needing less food to maintain their body temperature). As the young become larger, however, the effects of the helper become more obvious. The number of feeding visits made per day is some 16% higher in the presence of a helper than it is at nests without helpers. The fact that the feeding rate does not increase by 50% is not merely due to the helper not doing his full 'share', but is also due to the fact that both parents decrease their work-load (females reduce their feeding rate from about 9.9 to 7.8 visits per hour, males from about 11.2 to 8.8 visits per hour).

The work done by helpers may have a direct effect on the chances of survival of the breeding pair: by not having to work so hard to bring so much food to the nest, they may be able to be more on their guard against predators. Also, they may be able to keep themselves in better condition. By accustoming the birds to land on electronic weighing perches positioned just in front of their nests, it was possible to obtain a large sample of weights of parents feeding nestlings. Those doing so in the presence of a helper weighed, on average, 7.91 g, while those without a helper were significantly lighter, at 7.59 g.

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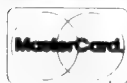
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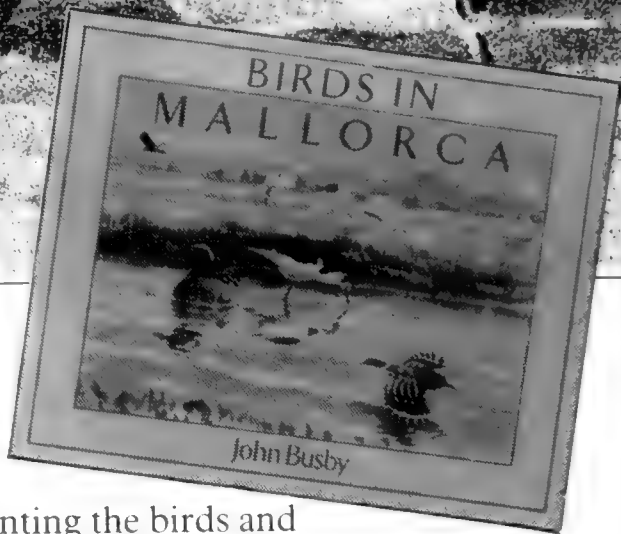
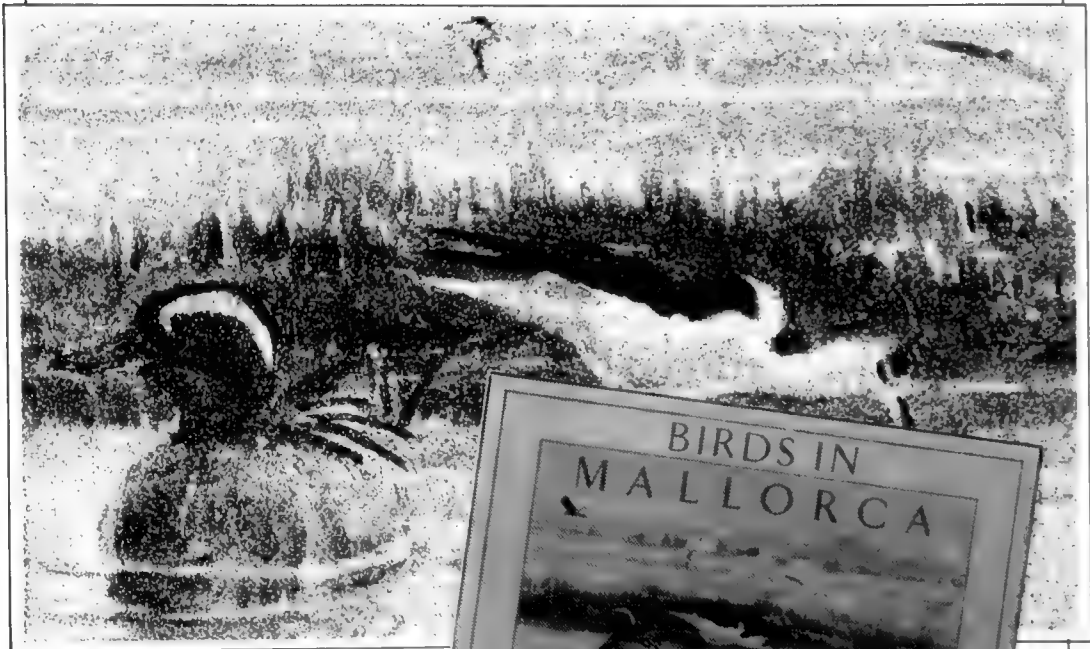
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The presence of helpers had a marked effect on the survival of the chicks. Of 68 chicks in nests with helpers, 26 (38.2%) are known to have survived to the following breeding season, as opposed to only 25 out of 114 (21.9%) in nests without helpers, a significant difference. We do not know exactly how the presence of helpers effects the survival of the young, but it is likely that it is associated with the young being better nourished. As a result of the higher feeding rates at nests with helpers, the young were significantly heavier than those in nests where no helpers were present. Since those chicks which survived to breed were significantly heavier than those which are not known to have survived, it seems that the helpers have a direct effect on the chances of their foster-chicks' survival by providing them with more food. (Statistical analysis confirmed that the higher feeding rates at nests with helpers was due to the efforts of the helpers themselves; it was not because helpers were attracted to nests where there were already high feeding rates.)

### Discussion

The Long-tailed Tit's habit of having helpers at the nest plainly does make it atypical for a temperate species. Can we explain why it behaves in this way? We outlined earlier some of the reasons why certain species were thought to have evolved the habit of co-operative breeding. Although by no means all researchers would agree that the 'habitat-full' hypothesis was the only explanation for the behaviour, it does seem a possible explanation in many situations, especially those in warmer climates. This explanation does not, however, seem very good for the Long-tailed Tit. Apart from anything else, the occasional years of extreme cold which lead to such great reductions in numbers of Long-tailed Tits do not appear to alter their behaviour. One might expect that, if the 'habitat-full' hypothesis explained their behaviour, the flocks would break up into more 'normal' pairs at times when numbers were greatly reduced; yet, under such conditions, they remain in flocks.

Further, in typical co-operative breeders, only one pair (or only a very small proportion of the birds) actually participates in the breeding; the others merely help. In the case of the Long-tailed Tit, however, it seems likely that virtually every individual at least attempts to breed.

To some extent, this argument still begs the question. Why should these birds go and help others rather than starting another nest of their own? If it were successful, they would confer more of their genes to the following generation than they would by helping their relatives. There may be a simple explanation for this. It is known that several other species of small insectivorous bird are single-brooded (e.g. Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* and Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*), suggesting perhaps that these species cannot easily find the abundant food they need for raising young over a long period of the summer. Further, for the Great Tit *Parus major*, the chances of raising young successfully fall off very rapidly as the season progresses (Perrins 1979). If this is true for the Long-tailed Tit also, it may explain why they go to help their relatives. A bird which loses its nest will not be able to have young of its own in the nest for at least





340. Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* feeding young in nest, Suffolk, May 1949 (Eric Hosking)

another 25 days (four or five days to build a nest, seven days to lay a clutch of eight eggs, and 13 days to incubate them). Hence, any replacement nest will be very late, and may stand much less chance of being successful.

Let us speculate as to the likely productivity of a bird starting to raise its own replacement brood as opposed to going to help a brother. In order to do so, we need to have some figures. Let us assume that:

- (1) each pair lays 8 eggs;
- (2) a nest in the main part of the breeding season has only a 20% chance of being successful (see above). For simplicity, let us also assume that half the losses (40%) occur prior to and half after the end of incubation; this is the same as saying that 45% survive each period;
- (3) that nests with helpers raise 1.7 times as many young as those without (38.2% versus 21.9%, see above);
- (4) that late (replacement) nests are only half as successful as early ones.

If we use these figures, it follows that the two choices facing a bird that has just lost a nest are:

- (a) to help at another nest which is just hatching. Without helpers this nest would produce  
$$(8 \times 0.45) = 3.6 \text{ survivors}$$
With helpers it will produce 1.7 times as many  
$$= 6.12 \text{ survivors}$$
The net gain in surviving relatives of the helper as a result of helping is therefore  $(6.12 - 3.6)$   
$$= 2.52 \text{ survivors}$$

- (b) to attempt another brood of its own. This will produce on average  
$$(8 \times 0.45 \times 0.45 \times 0.5) = 0.81 \text{ survivors}$$

The net gain of offspring related to the helper is therefore greater by helping than by attempting another brood of its own. Remember, however, that nephews and nieces carry only half as many genes of their uncles and aunts as do sons and daughters of their mothers and fathers.



For a helper to leave more genes by helping than by raising its own young, it must, therefore, raise twice as many (or more) nephews and nieces than it would have sons and daughters: in our example this is the case. Further, it should be remembered that a small proportion of the late nesters will, themselves, attract helpers; in doing so, these pairs raise their number of surviving young to 0.48 (i.e.  $0.28 \times 1.7$ ).

We are not, of course, suggesting that these figures are precisely accurate, but they are likely to be of the right order. They demonstrate that it is possible for helping to be more productive than raising a brood of one's own. Notice that two factors contribute to the differences: one is that the late birds have a reduced breeding success by being late; and the other is that, by going to help at a brood which has already hatched, the helpers are selecting broods which have already survived roughly half of the nesting dangers, and hence have a higher chance of survival than a nest which is just starting.

The theory of kin selection may be adequate to explain why most helpers help. In the case of the Long-tailed Tit, however, there may be another reason for doing so. If, as we suggest, membership of a winter flock is a prerequisite for winter survival, helping a relative may be the way in which childless birds 'buy' their way into a winter flock, so giving themselves a chance of surviving until the next season. Even if the actual helping had only a small effect on the success of the brood, it might still pay the helpers to do so in order to be able to over-winter in a flock.

341. Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* feeding young in nest, Shropshire, May 1980 (N. A. J. Wilde)



If this system pays off for Long-tailed Tits, why do we not find it more commonly amongst our other birds? The answer to this may be quite simple. By living in family parties all winter and setting up breeding territories within the winter territory, the Long-tailed Tit is, uniquely, in a position to recognise relatives in a way that almost no other British species can do. Hence, once again, the winter flocking explains why we see this behaviour in Long-tailed Tits and not in other species.

There is a weakness in our argument. We have suggested that membership of a winter flock is essential to the individual, either because the defended winter feeding territory provides secure food supplies or because the birds need to huddle in cold weather (or both). Nevertheless, these requirements do not seem to dictate that the flocks should necessarily be composed of relatives. What makes such a membership essential? Why do flocks not allow any spare birds to join them? Is it because there are disadvantages to increasing the numbers in a flock beyond a certain number?

### Future studies

The Long-tailed Tit is a difficult species to study. In the first year of the present study, nesting losses were so high that it was difficult to get enough colour-ringed families for observation in the winter. An attempt to remedy this by surrounding the nests with wire netting, to prevent Jays *Garrulus glandarius* (the most likely major predator) from destroying the nests, proved to be highly successful. Indeed, perhaps too successful, for there were then very few failed breeders available to become helpers.

Apart from the fact that, in view of the small samples of identified helpers, it would be valuable to have further evidence, the study raises a number of other questions. For example:

(1) What happens to the female of the family and any of her mate's sisters who may have helped raise the brood and over-wintered in the flock? Do they stay within the winter flock territory or do they, like the young females, move out? If they remain, they stand a good chance of mating with a relative (i.e. a son or a nephew).

(2) When a failed breeder goes to help another pair in its own winter flock area, does it do so only with a brother, as the data here suggest? The winter flock area also contains (at least at times) the mother and father and aunts and uncles of the helping bird. Out of the 12 observed cases, all were of birds helping brothers. Yet it seems unlikely that the helpers would be able to distinguish these from others in the flock area (genetically, there would be no point in avoiding helping one's parents, though helping an aunt or uncle is only half as good).

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## Notes

**Fulmar attempting to take young Raven from nest** On 29th April 1985, while walking along the cliffs at Yesnaby, Mainland, Orkney, I approached a traditional nest site of a Raven *Corvus corax*. From about 150 m, I looked through binoculars at the nest, which appeared to be occupied only by one young Raven. Suddenly, a Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* landed at the nest, seized the chick with its bill and attempted to pull it off the nest. Almost immediately, an adult Raven flew in and, by swooping repeatedly at the Fulmar, forced it to retreat. I did not stay longer, as my presence may have been instrumental in keeping the adult Raven from its nest. The whole incident lasted about 15 seconds.



P. DAVEY

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Professor G. M. Dunnet has commented that he has never observed a Fulmar behave in this way. This behaviour is so unexpected that any corroborative observations will be welcomed. EDS

**Moorhen and Black-headed Gull apparently laying in same nest** In 1982, at Barbush sand-quarry, near Dunblane, Central Region, about 37 pairs of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* nested in a colony. Most nests were on reed clumps in a small pool, although eight were on a nearby shore. Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus* were frequently noted close by on The Allan Water, and often visited the pools. On the morning of 12th May, two Moorhen eggs were found in what appeared to be a typical gull nest on a reed clump. Many neighbouring gulls had completed clutches by this time. On 13th May, two gull eggs were noted alongside the Moorhen eggs (plate 342). The Moorhen eggs were accepted by the nesting gulls, were incubated, and changed position in the nest. During early June, they hatched successfully, and two black Moorhen chicks were reliably reported as being brooded by a gull. The fate of the gull eggs is not known, nor is it known whether the adult



342. Eggs of Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* and Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* in same nest, Central Region, May 1982 (Gareth Jones)

gulls fed the Moorhen chicks. From June until August, two adult Moorhens with four young were at the gull colony; two chicks were considerably smaller than the other two. If the adults were the parents of the chicks hatched by the gulls, it may be that the Moorhens hatched young elsewhere, perhaps in a nest of their own.

Three explanations can be offered for the mixed clutch. First, in the extremely unlikely event of the nest having been constructed by the Moorhens, it may have been taken over by the gulls. Gulls nesting on reed-clump islands at Barbush were considerably less likely to lose eggs than were those nesting on the shore: of 28 eggs observed in island nests, only one (4%) disappeared during incubation, while eight (61.5%) of 13 eggs in shore nests were lost, presumably through predation. Competition for island nests was therefore likely to have been intense among gulls, and Moorhens may have been evicted from their own nest.

Secondly, the Moorhens may have taken over a gull nest and the female begun to lay in it (Moorhens often occupy nests built by other species: Campbell & Ferguson-Lees 1972); when the female gull then laid, the Moorhens may have deserted. If this were the case, it is hardly surprising that the Moorhen eggs hatched: the incubation period for the Moorhen is 21-22 days (Wood 1974), and for the Black-headed Gull typically 22-24 days (Campbell & Ferguson-Lees 1972).

Thirdly, the behaviour may have been an extension of 'egg-dumping' by Moorhens. Females fairly often lay eggs in the nests of other Moorhen pairs (Wood 1974; Huxley & Wood 1976), although there seems to be no previous record of Moorhen eggs being hatched by a different species (Payne 1977).

It is, of course, also possible, but extremely unlikely, that the

Moorhen eggs had been transferred to the gull nest by human beings.

Acknowledgments are due to Marion Petrie for comments on an earlier draft of the manuscript.

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**Distraction display by Turnstone near Oystercatcher chicks in mainland Scotland** On 21st June 1985, at a rocky bay on the Grampian coast, Scotland, I watched an agitated female Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* in summer plumage make several low short flights and give a 'chattering-alarm' call (see *BWP*, vol. 3). Nearby were two pairs of nesting Ringed Plovers *Charadrius hiaticula* and one pair of Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*, the latter with two chicks about two-thirds the size of the Turnstone. I left after a few minutes. On 26th June, the Turnstone was still present and stayed near the Oystercatcher, calling continuously. It then gave a 'broken wing', tail-fanned distraction display in front of the Oystercatcher, which ran after it for 4-5 m with neck hunched and beak pointing down. The Turnstone quickly returned to the larger wader's chicks and the performance was repeated. The Oystercatcher returned, and brooded the chicks. The Turnstone then settled on a rock 1 m away; it certainly had no chicks of its own and was apparently attempting to foster the Oystercatcher's chicks. On 29th June, one of five Turnstones then in the bay gave a slight display. On 7th July, however, what was apparently this same female Turnstone displayed more vigorously than ever, even calling when gulls *Larus* flew over, and was still clearly associating with the Oystercatcher and her, by now, large chicks; no other Turnstones were present. A week later, on 16th July, the Turnstone was not seen and presumably had left the area.

This behaviour seems unusual, especially as it was so prolonged (at least 17 days). Distraction display is a generally accepted criterion for breeding success. Superficially, the Turnstone's behaviour was consistent with that of a breeder, but there was no firm evidence that it had even attempted to nest.

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Derek Goodwin has commented: 'Obviously the Turnstone had "adopted" (or "thought" she had, though they did not) the Oystercatcher chicks. Distraction display may be considered a generally accepted criterion for breeding success, but it certainly should not be. Although it commonly (especially in waders) indicates the presence of dependent young nearby, it may be given, to human judgment, "out of context" by birds without young.' Dr K. E. L. Simmons has to this added the following: 'I agree with what has been said, but distraction display can also occur during antagonistic encounters

between a larger species and a smaller, performed by the smaller *instead of* threat/attack, or alternating with them. I drew attention to this in my review of "predator-reactions" by waders (1955, *Behaviour* 8: 130-173), mentioning observations by E. A. Armstrong (Little Ringed Plover *C. dubius*/Ringed Plover), E. Selous (Kentish Plover *C. alexandrinus*/Oystercatcher; Ringed Plover/Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*) and H. Zimmerman (Kentish Plover/Oystercatcher), and gave a number of examples in *BLP*, vol. 3. Whatever the "function" of such behaviour, I explained it, casually, as due to a switch in motivation from (more or less) balanced "attack/escape" (which produces threat) to "escape/attack" (which produces what I now call "distraction-lure display"). There may have been an element of this, too, in the Turnstone's behaviour, which appeared to be directed against the parent Oystercatcher on at least one occasion.' EDS

**Spotted Sandpiper feeding with Chaffinches among beech mast** On 8th November 1982, I stopped at Clonakilty, Co. Cork, to try to re-locate a Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* that had been present for over a month along the river estuary. After having failed to find it in its usual haunts, I noticed a wader fly up from the road and over a wall with a flock of about 25 Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs*. I drove around the corner and returned on foot in time to see the Spotted Sandpiper fly back over the wall from the river side of the road and join the Chaffinches, which dropped down from some beeches *Fagus sylvatica*. All the birds continued to feed in the road among the beech mast that was heavily scattered there. The sandpiper fed among the Chaffinches and moved with the flock. After about five minutes, a car drove past: the sandpiper flew over the wall and settled on the bank of the river, while the finches went up into the trees; as the Chaffinches flew down, the sandpiper flew back over the wall and joined them among the mast. After some 25 minutes of watching this happen every time that a car went past, I inspected the area where the birds were feeding; I found a quantity of insects among the mast and leaf-matter, as one would expect in such debris.

CHRISTOPHER J. WILSON

*Dreoilín, Knockavilla, Dundrum, Co. Tipperary*

**Mutual contact by roosting Dippers** In 304 visits to roosts of Dippers *Cinclus cinclus*, R. Hewson (*Bird Study* 16: 89-101) assessed site fidelity, seasonal patterns and behaviour; while G. Shaw (*Bird Study* 26: 171-178), after 96 visits to four occupied roosts, discussed the advantages to Dippers of roosting at bridges where high winds could be avoided on cold nights. Despite finding up to six Dippers at single sites, neither author describes any physical contact between individuals. Any encounters that occurred were usually aggressive; indeed, Shaw indicated that, unlike Wrens *Troglodytes troglodytes* and Treecreepers *Certhia familiaris* which huddle together for warmth, Dippers merely shared a favourable roost habitat without co-operating to enhance any sheltering effect.

At 20.30 GMT on 26th January 1985, a night of sub-zero air temperatures following a cold spell lasting seven to ten days, we visited several Dipper roosts as part of a wider research programme which had previously involved 97 visits to sites holding up to eight individuals. In



a 110-mm-wide clay drainpipe sunk horizontally into a gabion (earth foundations) at Newbridge on Wye, Powys, two Dippers were found roosting in close physical contact, one (an adult female) behind the other (an adult male); both had previously been trapped and ringed nearby. It cannot be assessed whether they were in contact in order to maintain warmth. The female had gained weight by 4% and the male by 6% since being controlled 53 days previously; by contrast, three other Dippers had lost 1-3% in weight within the same period. Dippers in mid Wales in January/February are, however, generally gaining weight prior to the breeding season (Ormerod & Tyler, unpublished). It seems more likely that the birds were paired as a preliminary to breeding, as are many Dippers during the winter, including at roost. There was further evidence for the latter when, in milder weather on 23rd February 1985, the same two Dippers were again found roosting in physical contact. No similar contact has since been noted in over 500 visits to Dipper roosts.

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**Field characters of Eastern Pied and Hume's Wheatears** The recent paper, 'Field identification of West Palearctic Wheatears' (*Brit. Birds* 80: 137-157, 187-238), prompted me to record the following. During April to June 1978, in eastern Iran, I observed many Eastern Pied Wheatears *Oenanthe picata* of the nominate race. All the males showed obvious buff on the undertail-coverts; this useful feature is described only for 'autumn' birds in Mr Clement's text. I also watched Hume's Wheatears *O. alboniger*, and I found that, in addition to the features mentioned in Mr Clement's paper, one of the best characters for separation from Eastern Pied was the extent of the black throat 'bib'. On Eastern Pied, this bib extended onto the upper breast and, at the sides, often slightly down the fore-flanks (as on plate 107), whereas on Hume's, the black did not extend so far down, and did not usually meet the black of the wings; rather, there was often a white 'notch' above the fold of the wing.

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Peter Clement has commented: 'I have looked at my notes and at slides of birds in the BM collection (as I said at the time of writing the paper, Hume's is the only West Palearctic wheatear that I have not seen in the field) and there is a slight variation here, with some birds having a slight extension of black onto the uppermost breast feathers, but since we are talking about a matter of a few millimetres at most this may be the result of the way the skin is preserved more than reality. I'd very much like the chance to find out in the field.' Eds

**Identification of Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** Kitson (1980) drew attention to the bold buffy-white supercilium of Pallas's Grasshopper Warblers *Locustella certhiola* observed in Mongolia in spring 1977 and summer 1979; his photographs (73: plates 203 & 204) clearly indicate a



bold supercilium and well-developed fringes to the wing-coverts. Densley (1982), after visiting Mongolia in June 1980, supported these observations, and stressed that spring adults were 'much more strikingly plumaged . . . than the literature, and especially illustrations, suggest'. Both authors stated that these plumage features were sufficiently different to distinguish Pallas's Grasshopper from any other *Locustella* warblers. On two first-winter Pallas's Grasshopper Warblers caught in autumn on Fair Isle, Shetland, however, the supercilium was comparatively ill-defined and the edgings to the wing-coverts less distinctive (Page & Greaves 1983; Broyd 1983): in other words, they looked nothing like the individuals seen in Mongolia. Two points may clarify these apparent differences: race and age. Kitson (1980) did not mention race. Densley (1982), however, stated that the birds he observed were apparently of the Siberian race *rubescens* (to which vagrants reaching the westernmost Palearctic are believed to belong: Williamson 1968). This was, I suggest, incorrect. From the photographs in both Kitson and Densley (73: plates 203 & 204; 75: plate 52), the Mongolian individuals strongly resemble the race *centralasiae* or just possibly *certhiola*, though the breeding distribution of the former would be more in keeping with the region. The plumage coloration and pattern of adults of these two races are strikingly different from those of *rubescens*, which is altogether a much darker and less marked bird. The supercilium and wing-covert fringes on the more eastern races are so bold and contrasting that they could easily be likened to those of Sedge *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* or Moustached Warblers *A. melanopogon*, as stated by Kitson and Densley. Also, comparing plumage features of adult Pallas's Grasshopper Warblers of any race with those of first-years should be avoided: on first-years of all races, the supercilium is relatively subdued, so that adults of any race appear more strikingly marked than immatures of any race. Racial variation in plumage of first-years is significantly less marked than that of adults; without considerable experience, it is virtually impossible to separate young Pallas's Grasshoppers into subspecies.

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**Aberrant song of Wood Warbler in presence of Cuckoo** On 15th May 1967, in a small woodland in Surrey, I was watching a singing male Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* in the tree canopy; it gave the basic trilling song, but did not include the second phase of song. A Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* then flew in and perched in full view on a low shrub about 20 m from where I sat. Almost immediately, the warbler flew and perched on another low shrub about 3 m from the Cuckoo, from where

it gave an unusual form of song. This was reminiscent of the second phase of normal song, but somewhat different in character and continuous in execution: instead of a series of repeated plaintive notes on a descending scale, the notes were all at the same pitch and were grouped to form separate motifs varying from two to seven elements uttered at random. The warbler continued to give this song without a break throughout the ten or more minutes that the Cuckoo was present, during which period both birds remained perfectly motionless. No female Wood Warbler arrived, suggesting that the male was almost certainly unmated. From its general behaviour, I judged the Cuckoo to be a prospecting female. I succeeded in obtaining a tape-recording of the aberrant song (*British Bird Vocabulary* vol. 3, side D, example 3). As soon as the Cuckoo left, the warbler returned to the canopy and resumed his normal trilling song. I have since heard this aberrant song given by a Wood Warbler in the presence of a Cuckoo on three occasions, in Sussex, Surrey and Herefordshire; in one case the Cuckoo was a female, which flew out of cover and gave the bubbling call as I approached, and on another a male, which uttered the familiar 'cuckoo' call as it left the wood. Each time, the warbler ceased giving the aberrant song when the Cuckoo departed. On a further occasion, on 12th May 1987, at Lyonshall Woods, Herefordshire, I again heard this song, but this time did not see or hear a Cuckoo; the warbler abruptly stopped singing as I approached.

It is interesting to note that either sex of Cuckoo can apparently elicit this same response from the Wood Warbler, which is incidentally only a rare host of the Cuckoo. Furthermore, over the years I have been in the company of female Cuckoos and their presumed hosts (of other species) many times, but I have never heard any of the latter utter any sort of song whatsoever.

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**Calls of Willow Warbler** At 10.30 GMT on 5th April 1987, at Thornhill Park, Southampton, Hampshire, I heard a Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* call and, about five seconds later, a short snatch of song from a Chiffchaff *P. collybita*. I found the Willow Warbler feeding actively in the top of a silver birch *Betula pendula*; as I watched it, the Chiffchaff again sang from a tree 8 m away. I was then amazed to hear the Willow Warbler give a short, explosive call followed by a very brief burst of normal (though unenthusiastic) song; it then gave another short, explosive call, a short, quiet trill, and a further bit of song; this was followed by two 'hooet' calls, another brief snatch of song, a third explosive call and a trill. I transcribed the explosive call as 'zchuf', short but full, not unlike the call of a House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, not loud yet easily audible from about 6-7 m below; and the trill as 'srirrrrrr', thin and high-pitched like the call of a feeding Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*, but quieter and less sharp.

I have never heard the explosive call or the trill given by any *Phylloscopus* warbler and can find no mention of either in the literature.

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**Unusual alarm call of Willow Warbler** At 17.00 GMT on 19th May 1986, at Eastbridge, Suffolk, I started 'pishing' rather loudly in a successful attempt to draw a Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* out into the open. My pishing also attracted a bird which I immediately identified as a Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*. I soon doubted my identification, however, when it began a series of most unusual calls. Whenever I started pishing, the warbler uttered a harsh, chattering 'song', lasting about three seconds, quite unlike anything I had heard before. Its head and body feathers were fluffed out, and the song was repeated six or seven times. It then gave a typical Willow Warbler song and moved off.

Eric Simms (1985, *British Warblers*) noted this alarm call being given by Willow Warbler in response to a Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, but not to a man.

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Derek Goodwin has commented that the studies by George Edwards, Eric Hosking and Stuart Smith (*Brit. Birds* 42: 13-19; 43: 144-150) revealed Willow Warblers responding in this way to stuffed Cuckoos and to human imitations of the Cuckoo's song, and suggested that the loud pishing could have resembled the chattering call of the Cuckoo. EDS

**Blue Tits with various bill deformities** On every day since 1973, my late wife and I fed the birds in our garden at Woking, Surrey. The bungalow and garden are overshadowed by trees and shrubs, and Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus* are frequent visitors to the several artificial feeders. On many occasions during December 1984 to February 1985, however, we were amazed to see seven different Blue Tits each of which had a particular and marked bill deformity. We were able to observe these, from inside the bungalow, at distances ranging from 1.5 m to 4.6 m, and careful notes and sketches of each tit were made at the time (fig. 1). In order to gauge the lengths of the tits' bills, a 1-inch (25-mm) matchstick was taped to a line from which one of the feeders was suspended; tits perched close to this on occasions, enabling accurate bill-length assessments to be made. Bird *A* was seen daily during 24th-29th December; *B* was seen on 12 dates between 29th December and 11th January; *C* on 1st and 2nd January; *D* on 3rd and 4th January; *E* on six dates during 20th-29th January; *F* on 7th-9th, 11th and 15th February; and *G* on 9th, 11th and 16th February. The following notes were made on the spot:

*A* Bill like treecreeper *Certhia*, partly pale; length 1 inch (25 mm), lower mandible (not clearly seen) shorter. Very active. Fed on peanuts, but mostly on cake; when feeding on larger lumps of cake, threw head back with considerable jerk so that bill pointed vertically upwards.

*B* Woodpecker-like bill, strong; length  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch (18.75 mm). Appeared very healthy. Fed voraciously on cake, also on peanuts. Very shy (movement inside the house caused

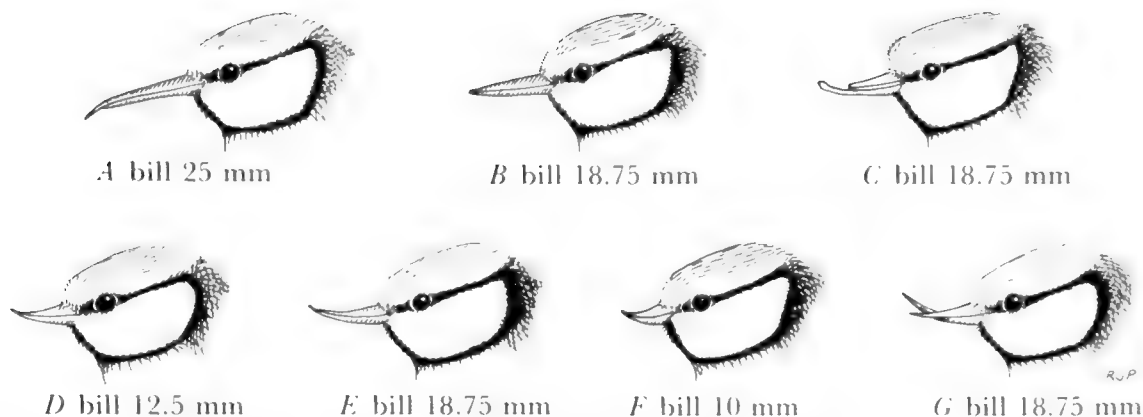


Fig. 1. Bill deformities of Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus*, Woking, Surrey, December 1984–February 1985 (from original sketches, redrawn by R. J. Prytherch)

instant alarm). Although bird far from aggressive, other tits kept well out of way of its bill.  
**C** Grossly deformed bill and forehead, latter blunted: lower mandible  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch (18.75 mm) long, upcurved, with slightly spoon-like tip, pale; upper mandible shorter and straight; whole bill very frail and thin. Bird emaciated and in poor condition. Very active. Fed well on cake, but seemed unable to peck peanuts.

**D** Bill pale, sharply upturned,  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch (12.5 mm) long (comparative lengths of upper and lower mandibles not known). Very active. Fed on cake and suet. Very shy.

**E** Bill turned sharply upwards, length  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch (18.75 mm). Very active. Fed busily on cake (without difficulty) and peanuts. Initially very shy, but became tamer by fifth day.

**F** Bill pale, upturned, slightly longer than 'normal',  $\frac{2}{5}$  inch (10 mm). Fed on cake and peanuts.

**G** Bill grossly deformed: both mandibles  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch (18.75 mm) long and upturned, lower mandible crossing beneath upper and bending to right; tips separated. In good condition and very active. Fed repeatedly on peanuts (9th Feb.) and cake (11th and 16th Feb.).

I wish to thank the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), Tring, the BTO, and Mr and Mrs D. I. F. Elliot for helpful advice and encouragement during the period of these observations.

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**Treecreeper foraging on treated larch fence** Treecreepers *Certhia familiaris* feed, and possibly breed, in a mature mixed copse adjoining the garden of my house at Thornham, Norfolk. At about 15.00 GMT on 3rd June 1986, a cold, windy, showery day, one was foraging in typical manner on a 90-cm-high lap-fence made of larch *Larix*, behind which is a 3-m-high cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*. The fence had recently been treated with a 'dark-oak', non-poisonous, resin-based preservative, perhaps giving it a bark-coloured appearance. The side of the fence on which the Treecreeper was had the lap uppermost and vertical battens about 45 cm apart. The bird worked its way upwards, inspecting and probing between the lapped panels and the battens; when it reached the top of one batten, it flew down to the bottom of the next one and worked its way up again. It continued this foraging for some time, covering about 5 m of fencing, before flying over the fence and out of sight under the laurels. Presumably, insects had re-established themselves in the fence crevices after painting, but I could not see what the Treecreeper was taking.

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# Letters

**The identity of 'Mystery photograph 97'** In the light of 25 years' experience in studying *Aythya* hybrids, I do not consider that the bird in mystery photograph 97 (*Brit. Birds* 77: plate 254; 78: plate 19; 81: plate 343) is a Tufted Duck *A. fuligula* × Pochard *A. ferina* hybrid as defined by Gillham *et al.* (1966). The head-shape and bill-tip are, as stated, perhaps reminiscent of a male Ring-necked Duck *A. collaris*, but so, too, are the longish tail, the dusky area on the bill, the extensive light area of the flanks, and a much reduced amount of black on the breast. Moreover, Perrins' (1961) description of the famous duck at Sutton Courtenay, Berkshire, the prototype of the Tufted Duck × Pochard hybrid, indicates that the highest point of the head was immediately above the eye, not well behind it as in mystery photograph 97. A surprising statement is that the head sheen of a true Lesser Scaup *A. affinis* is bluish, a characteristic not mentioned in any reference books that I have looked at. One may wonder why so many good observers ever considered the Sutton Courtenay hybrid, with its brownish-purple head gloss, a Lesser Scaup. It is suggested that female Tufted × male Pochard produces a hybrid 'much more like a typical female Tufted Duck', but what Gillham *et al.* (1966) stated was that the appearance of this 'Tufted Duck type' hybrid is rather like that of *some* male Tufted in post-breeding moult; nor did we write that the head sheen of 'Lesser

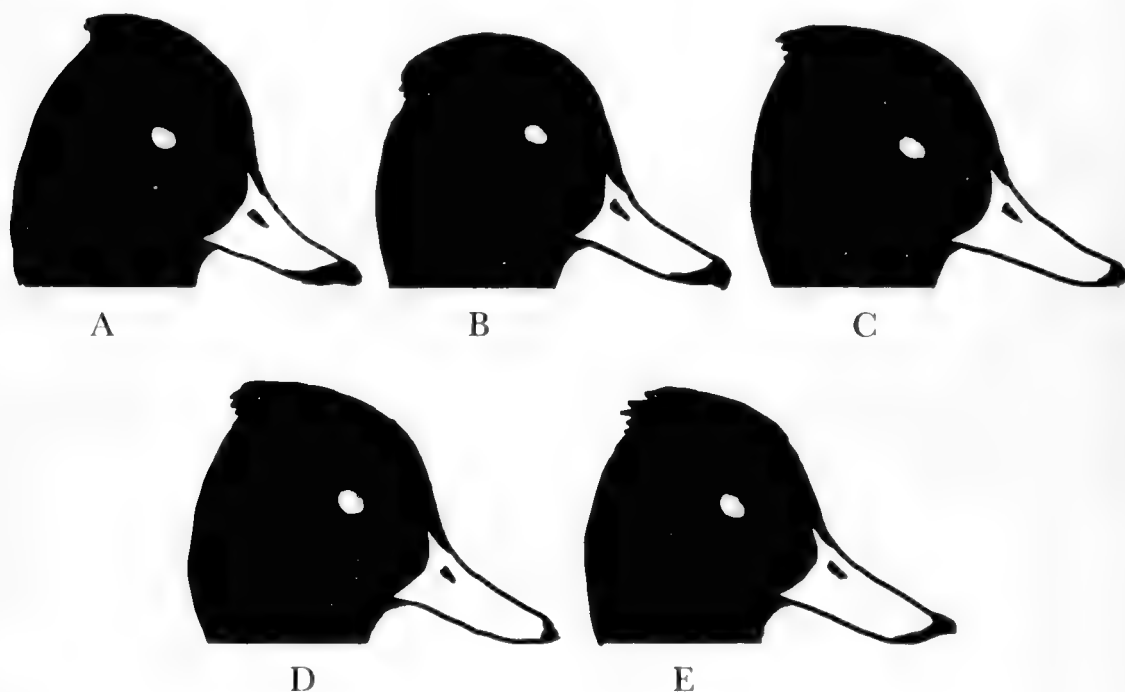


Fig. 1. Heads of *Aythya* hybrids redrawn from photographs. *A* Mystery photograph 97 (*Brit. Birds* 77: plate 254; 78: plate 19; 81: plate 343); *B* Tufted × Pochard hybrid (from Gillham *et al.* 1966, plate 2); *C* Scaup × Tufted hybrid (from photograph by E. H. Gillham: see plate 344); *D* Scaup × Tufted hybrid (from Gillham *et al.* 1966, plate 14); *E* Probable Tufted × Pochard hybrid (from Gantlett, 1985, *Brit. Birds* 78: 42-43, fig. 1)



343. Male hybrid *Aythya* with Tufted Ducks *A. fuligula*, Netherlands, November 1982 (Arnoud B. van den Berg)

Scaup type' (=Tufted  $\times$  Pochard) hybrids can be greenish as on Scaup, but rather that Dr G. V. T. Matthews noted a distinct green tinge towards the back of the head (not on the whole head). The head-shape of the hybrid in mystery photograph 97 looks similar to that of two of four variations of the Scaup *A. marila*  $\times$  Tufted Duck hybrid (see plate 344); the mystery bird was photographed in November, when the 'tuft' is not always fully developed.

To speculate on the identity of the mystery bird, I would say that it might be a cross between a Ring-necked Duck and a Scaup, or perhaps a cross between a Ring-necked Duck and a 'Scaup-type' hybrid.

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344. Hybrid Scaup *Aythya marila*  $\times$  Tufted Duck *A. fuligula*, Sussex, December 1982 (Eric Gillham)

K. C. Osborne has replied as follows: 'The purpose in publishing 'Mystery photograph 97' was to draw readers' attention to the hybrid problem, rather than to pursue the finer aspects of interpretation. I am, however, grateful to Eric Gillham for pointing out two erroneous statements, both introduced into my original draft by the editorial panel: (i) the incorrect green 'head sheen', and (ii) the appearance of the hybrid of reversed parentage. His comment on the peak of the crown being directly above the eye seems inconclusive and is not borne out by photographs. The head sheen of Lesser Scaup may be described, in my view, as 'bluish', in comparison with the Scaup's 'greenish' head. On birds I saw in captivity, the colour was a bluish-violet (or mauve), but I believe that the tint may vary according to reflected light; I do not think that it can ever be brown-purple.

which would suggest hybridisation with Pochard.

'Mr Gillham raises some interesting possibilities, but I still believe the mystery bird (*Brit. Birds* 77: plate 254; 78: plate 19; 81: plate 343) to be a Tufted Duck  $\times$  Pochard hybrid. Whether its parentage could have included Ring-necked Duck seems debatable: the bill-tip and flanks suggest this possibility; on the other hand, it has a tuft on its head, making Tufted Duck parentage fairly certain. The suggestion that Ring-necked Duck parentage may be involved seems more acceptable than the speculative idea that the bird could be a Ring-necked Duck  $\times$  Scaup hybrid. To examine this point more fully, I have redrawn (from photographs) a number of hybrids' heads (fig. 1, page 650). Head A clearly shows a tuft, as do the remaining heads (where it is longer); the tuft favours Tufted Duck parentage. A Ring-necked  $\times$  Scaup hybrid is unlikely to have a tuft. The triple combination of broadly tipped bill, tuft on crown and grey mantle points to a Tufted Duck  $\times$  Pochard cross.' EDS

**The Feral Rock Dove** At the risk of boring the pants off half your readers, may I ask the following crucial question: is the Feral Rock Dove a full species or not? I find it mentioned in some important works, such as the BTO/IWC atlases of breeding birds and wintering birds, and it appears in a good number of local avifaunas. The notice given to it is, however, not consistent, for it is lacking from such basic works as *The Birds of Kent* (1981) and *A New Guide to the Birds of Essex* (1984), as well as from more regional avifaunas such as *The Birds of Sheringham* (1987). I also find a considerable distaste for this 'species' among fellow birders, who prefer not to include it on their year lists, site lists or whatever. There is, therefore, a great rift in the bird world between those who regard Feral Rock Dove as 'tickable' as pure *Columba livia* and those who do not. I believe this is a question of genetic purity, and has little to do with the frequent adulteration of wild populations with escaped racing pigeons. Can any reader of *British Birds* plead a strong case for or against the specific purity of Feral Rock Dove, and can this case be carried over to include other domestic forms such as the Emden Goose *Anser anser* and the Aylesbury Duck *Anas platyrhynchos*? The Feral Rock Dove must be given equal treatment throughout Britain, in place of the current hotchpotch of views.

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The feral Rock Doves (or 'Town Pigeons') and 'Racing Pigeons' are the same species, *Columba livia*, as the wild Rock Doves of our northern and western coasts. The importance (or otherwise) of the inclusion of the inland stocks, which are probably derived largely from semi-domesticated birds originally encouraged for human food, in county bird reports and published avifaunas, atlases, and so on is a matter on which we shall welcome readers' comments. EDS

**Beware Mongolian Lark** I was very interested to read Iain Robertson's article on the identification of White-winged Lark *Melanocorypha leucoptera* (*Brit. Birds* 79: 332-335), but was surprised that he made no mention of the Mongolian Lark *M. mongolica*, a species which could be confused with the White-winged especially if only poor views were obtained. Whilst there is no accepted record of Mongolian Lark in the Western Palearctic, the species has been observed in the Netherlands, where one was seen on 22nd March 1980 at Amsterdam's Schiphol International Airport (see *Dutch*



*Birding* 2: 69-70). The bird in question was thought to be an escape from a consignment of birds that had arrived from Hong Kong on 20th March 1980. In that article, Tim Inskipp was quoted as pointing out that the species was imported into the UK in 1979 and 1980, so, clearly, the possibility of an escaped Mongolian Lark turning up in Britain and Ireland exists. Given good views, the black patch at the side of the upper breast and the long white supercilia, which meet on the nape, should rule out White-winged Lark straight away. A bird seen poorly, however, especially if only in flight, could be misidentified as White-winged Lark, and observers should be aware of this potential pitfall.

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At Iain Robertson's suggestion, we invited Steve Madge, who has experience of both species, to supply the following contribution. EDS

**Mongolian and White-winged Larks** Confusion between these two species is likely only in flight. Arguably, partial-albino Skylark *Alauda arvensis*, which could show white in the wing and is perhaps more likely than either in western Europe, is a greater pitfall. It is, however, unlikely that a flight view of such a bird would add up to a specific identification of a potential vagrant of this rarity, and, once seen well, the head and breast patterns (described above by David Fisher) are diagnostic; additionally, White-winged Lark *Melanocorypha leucoptera* has an unremarkable head-pattern, whereas the heavier head and striking head-pattern of Mongolian Lark *M. mongolica* should be apparent given a reasonable view. Compared

345. Mongolian Lark *Melanocorypha mongolica*, Mongolia, June 1981 (S. C. Madge)



with White-winged Lark, Mongolian has more extensive white in the wing, lacking the dark band along the bases of the secondaries; but it is possible that the black neck patches are somewhat obscured in fresh plumage by pale feather tipping. Mongolian Larks are very popular as songsters in China, where it is one of the dominant cage-birds (Report on the Cambridge Ornithological Expedition to China 1985), so that its importation to western Europe through Hong Kong is not surprising.

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**Ageing and moult of Oriental Skylark** In his very thorough paper on identification of the Oriental (or Small) Skylark *Alauda gulgula* (*Brit. Birds* 79: 186-197), Hadoram Shirihai stated (page 193) that he had not been able to find any detailed information on ageing and moult of this species. Vaurie (1951, A study of Asiatic larks, *Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist.* 97: 510) provided information on moulting periods of high-altitude or strongly migratory populations of *A. gulgula* (and Skylark *A. arvensis*). I added information about the sedentary Philippine race *A. g. wolfei* (1969, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club* 89: 117-119).

As for ageing information, Vaurie (page 447) included *A. gulgula* among those larks with a complete 'post-juvenal' (= first prebasic) moult, after which 'the first winter bird cannot be distinguished from the adult'. In my note cited above, I mentioned having collected two females, an adult and a bird of the year (as determined by cranial and gonad conditions), in Luzon, Philippines, on 24th August 1956. The crest feathers of the young bird are distinctly shorter and blunter than those of the adult. I noted that 'This character must be used with caution, however, as specimens examined suggest that . . . there may be a sexual dimorphism, with males having, on the average, somewhat longer crest feathers than females.'

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**Identification of Oriental Skylark** The photographs of Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula* in Hadoram Shirihai's paper (*Brit. Birds* 79: 186-197) appear to show a potentially useful identification feature which is not mentioned in the text or drawings. All the photographs (except perhaps plate 107) clearly show a thin, dark vertical line across the lores in front of the eye. In some cases (e.g. plate 99) this line forms part of a continuous border around a wide, pale eye-ring. From the small sample of photographs in the article, this feature appears consistently different from Skylark *A. arvensis*, but scrutiny of more photographs and of individuals in the field (of both species) is necessary to establish whether this is a valid specific distinction.

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**Calls of Blyth's Pipit** In the solution to 'Mystery photograph' number 122 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 50-52), we wrote that the calls of Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* and Richard's Pipit *A. novaeseelandiae* 'are apparently very similar, and seem to be difficult to distinguish'. In fact, Blyth's and Richard's are generally more easily separated by calls than by plumage. Blyth's has two types of flight calls. One, generally heard only when flushed, is very similar to the normal flight call of Richard's, but slightly higher-pitched, slightly softer and more shrill and slightly less harsh. The other call is diagnostic: a short, rather hard 'chep', reminiscent of one of the calls of Tawny Pipit *A. campestris*. This call is given either in combination with the first or separately, often repeated. Finally, the alarm call of Blyth's is a short, very harsh 'bzrep' or, differently transcribed, 'brzi', very different from that of Richard's, which is the same as the normal flight call plus a softer, slightly less harsh and more muted version (approaching Blyth's in tone). The alarm call is very unlikely to be heard outside the breeding areas.

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**Identification of black-headed Yellow Wagtails** Martin van den Berg and Gerald Oreel are not happy with my remark (*Brit. Birds* 81: 77-78) that the black-headed race of the Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava feldegg* is distinctive enough to prevent confusion with the grey-headed *thunbergi*. In their comment, they stated that I have an oversimplified view, and imply—without foundation—that I have influenced the Swedish rarities committee to accept records of *feldegg* of an insufficient quality. Thus, van den Berg & Oreel have reaffirmed their opinion that many of the Swedish records of *feldegg* are unreliable and probably refer to *thunbergi*.

We are always free to speculate—the antennae of the snail called science—but should also react when overwhelming facts are presented. In this case, I think I have examined between 500 and 1,500 males of *thunbergi* over the 35 or so years that I have been birdwatching. The subspecies breeds in half of my country, and the southern limit of its breeding range runs only some 200 km north of Stockholm, where I live. Never have I seen one single male that even for a moment looked confusingly black-headed and glossy. Similarly, when travelling in Southeast Europe and Israel, I have found the male of the subspecies *feldegg* very characteristic, invariably jet-black over 90% or more of its crown, nape and ear-coverts (though see the closing paragraph of my earlier letter). This view is shared by a large number of experienced and reliable Swedish and Finnish field ornithologists, and I have not met one who shares van den Berg's and Oreel's worries.

Further, I have personally examined every single skin of the Yellow Wagtail in the collections at Stockholm, Uppsala, Lund, Gothenburg, Copenhagen, Leningrad and Tring (in total, roughly 500 *thunbergi* males). This study has conclusively confirmed my opinion based on fieldwork. No true intergrades between the two forms, difficult to refer to either, occur in Western or Northern Europe. Without this bridge, I fail to see how a confusion problem exists. This is *not* to say that subspecific identification

of Yellow Wagtails in the field is easy, or that their call notes lack importance.

Van den Berg and Oreel vaguely referred to 'previous studies', said to treat the confusion risk under discussion, but mentioned only one, by Sammalisto (1961). Sammalisto has to date found three males out of about 4,000 with seemingly black heads. But these three were in worn breeding plumage (mainly July: heavy wear will always darken the head of a male *thunbergi*), and they were *neither jet-black nor glossy*; they looked *mat blackish* (Sammalisto verbally). It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that they were in fact *thunbergi*, but extremely worn and dark on their heads. Still, they did *not* look like *feldegg*, and, once again, it is necessary to bear in mind that all records of *feldegg* in Northern Europe have been during the spring migration (mainly May), when all Yellow Wagtails are in fresh plumage; Sammalisto's research has concerned only breeding birds.

As may now be apparent to some readers, I am not 'just denying the incidence of black-headed variants in the *thunbergi* population', as van den Berg & Oreel maintained, but base my opinion on facts and personal research. Now, may I call their hand, please?

LARS SVENSSON

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**Taxonomy of Yellow-browed Warblers** We would like to comment on statements made by Svensson and Madge (*Brit. Birds* 80: 580-581) regarding Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* of the subspecies *mandellii*. Svensson quoted us as saying that 'the calls are very similar to those of *humei*'. After Svensson's letter had been submitted to *British Birds*, we greatly increased our experience of *mandellii* in China in 1986 and 1987. We agree with Madge that one call of *mandellii* could be described as being somewhat intermediate between those of *humei* and *inornatus*. It is, however, still distinctly different from both of these. The call is a slurred, trisyllabic 'chewilit' (our transcriptions of the calls of *inornatus* and *humei* read 'tswee-eep', sometimes rather monosyllabic, and 'veelju' respectively). We have also heard from *mandellii* what sounds exactly like the usually doubled 'veelju', commonly heard from *humei* on the breeding grounds at least (probably a type of song). The song is identical to that of *humei*, and territory-holding *mandellii* respond to a tape-recording of *humei* as vigorously as to their own song.

We do not agree with Madge that the plumage of *mandellii* is 'closer to the nominate form' than to *humei*. According to our experience both of live birds and of museum specimens, *mandellii* is very similar to *humei*, and differs from *inornatus* by much the same plumage characters (and wing formula) as does *humei*.

Reproductive isolation is generally considered to be the primary criterion of a species. In practice, however, that is difficult to establish in allopatric populations. Testing the signals working as reproductively isolating mechanisms (for example, certain vocalisations, displays and morphological characters) would be of interest in such cases. In species with similar plumages, such as many *Phylloscopus* warblers, vocal

characters probably play a greater role than plumage characters in maintaining reproductive isolation.

Preliminary results from Tien Shan and Siberia (Mild 1988, *Soviet Bird Songs*) and China (PA & UO) indicate that *humei/mandellii* sometimes react to a tape-recording of *inornatus*, and vice versa. It is hoped that play-back experiments on the breeding grounds will show to what extent the three forms react to each others' songs. Great care should, however, be taken when interpreting the results from such tests.

A similar situation is found in Pallas's Warbler *P. proregulus*, which occurs in two disjunct centres of population, with pronounced vocal differences. In this case, play-back experiments have shown each of the two forms to react as little to the song of the other one as one would have expected from different species (Alström & Olsson *in prep.*).

PER ALSTRÖM and URBAN OLSSON  
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Steve Madge has commented: 'I find this most interesting and supportive of my comment on the complexities of vocals of Asian *Phylloscopus*. I have recorded the songs of Pallas's in Siberia and Manchuria (they are the same), but those I have taped in Sichuan, Sikkim and Kashmir are *all* quite different from each other and from northern forms. Interesting that they found *mandellii* closer to *humei* on plumage, as Ticehurst [*The Handbook*] says p. 106 "this form shows no close resemblance to *humei* and is much nearer to *inornatus*"; he also gives examples of northern populations of *mandellii* which indicate some intergrading of characters with nominate.' EDS

**Reverse migration** The discussion of 'reverse migration' in the recent paper on Yellow-browed Warblers *Phylloscopus inornatus* in Britain and Ireland (*Brit. Birds* 80: 105) reminded me of the following passage from C. B. Ticehurst's *A History of the Birds of Suffolk* (1932, page 147): 'An almost annual visitor to Shetland. I have no doubt this species [Yellow-browed Warbler] occurs more frequently than the [two Suffolk] records indicate but, breeding in Siberia and wintering in S.E. Asia, east of Sikkim, it is very remarkable that any should reach western Europe at all and one can only suppose that in this case, as in some others, the migratory instinct in certain individuals becomes inverted.' It seems from this that the late K. B. Rooke was not the first to refer to the 'miscalculation' by these birds.

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**The Magpie: sorrow or joy?** Some birds, such as the Robin *Erithacus rubecula* or the Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, seem to receive a uniformly good press. This is not, however, the case with the Magpie *Pica pica*, as demonstrated by recent articles and correspondence in *The Guardian* newspaper on the effect of Magpies on the populations of other species of birds (e.g. Williams 1986; Wilkinson 1986; Samuels 1986, 1987). Magpies have also been blamed for the wholesale destruction of small birds on local television news in northwest England (and elsewhere); indeed, the (far from new) idea that Magpies are incompatible with healthy populations of small birds is an ornithological myth which appears to be gaining ground.

From a Mancunian perspective, this idea appears unlikely. Manchester has a very high Magpie density (e.g. Tatner 1982), yet, as Holland *et al.* (1984) pointed out in the 'Manchester Atlas', healthy numbers of many passerines co-exist with these Magpies. In work carried out in south Manchester, Tatner (1983) found that the main food items in the gizzards of Magpie nestlings were invertebrates rather than the eggs or nestlings of other species of birds. Holland *et al.* did, however, suggest that the decline of the Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* in the Manchester area may be related to increased Magpie numbers. The decline in Chaffinch numbers during the 1950s was, however, a nationwide event, probably due to the effects of toxic agricultural chemicals (Sharrock 1976), and, since I can see nothing in Chaffinch biology to make it more susceptible than other passerines to the effects of Magpies, I believe there is no real evidence to implicate Magpies.

All this is not to say that Magpies do not take some eggs, young birds and even on occasion adult birds.

There is, however, a great difference between 'taking some eggs' and 'having a significant effect on populations'. I know of no convincing case of Magpies having a significant effect, and the evidence suggests that, even at high densities of these beautiful and interesting birds, it is seldom the case.

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The recent increase in numbers of Magpies, particularly in urban and suburban areas (Lack, 1986, *The Atlas of Wintering Birds in Britain and Ireland*), has led to their being observed far more frequently by members of the general public, in places where nest predation is liable to be obvious. This undoubtedly contributes to their current 'bad press'. EDS

**Judging distances** As P. J. Grant demonstrated (*Brit. Birds* 76: 327-334), the judgment of distance is difficult. There is, however, a simple technique, apparently well known to sailors, which can help to overcome the problem. It is based on both the parallax phenomenon and the relative ease with which distances running across the line of sight can be estimated.

Hold a pencil vertically at arm's length, close one eye and align the pencil with the object. Next, open the first eye and close the other; the pencil will appear to jump. Estimate the distance of this jump, and multiply by nine. This will give a good approximation of the observer's

distance from the object. The multiplier may have to be modified to suit each observer, because it depends on the ratio of the distance between the eyes and the length of the outstretched arm. Although this may appear rough and ready, with a little practice surprisingly accurate results can be obtained.

I tested this method using five volunteers and objects at distances of 17 m and 55 m. Initial estimates ranged from 15-30 m and 40-100 m respectively. Application of the method described above provided much more accurate judgments: 16-18 m and 50-60 m respectively. This test was conducted in a suburban environment, where there are many visual cues to assist judgment; more care would be needed when considering distances over bare expanses of mud, sand or water.

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We welcome this contribution, but, as its accuracy depends also on the ability of the observer correctly to estimate the 'jump', urge caution in its use, particularly over longer distances. EDS

**Suggested changes to the English names of some Western Palearctic birds** What a ridiculous article issued by the BOURC in an attempt to push through a hotch-potch of unnecessary name changes (*Ibis* 130: supplement; *Brit. Birds* 81: 355-377). The reasons given for these changes are in certain cases dubious, inconsistent, misleading and always high-handed, with little thought apparently being given to the requirements of the British birdwatching public. The whole affair requires a referendum and should not be steamrollered through on the whims of 12 individuals.

So wake up all you hundreds of thousands of British birdwatchers, up in arms, pen to paper and tell the BOURC where to put its Bearded Parrotbills, Pied Avocets and Acorn Jays.

J. B. KEMP

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I understand that the proposed new names are causing consternation in some quarters. People are creatures of habit: any change is fought, even when progress marks an improvement. I believe that all your changes are necessary, and welcome them.

R. P. D. MUNN

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These extracts from long letters represent two of the diverse general views expressed in correspondence.

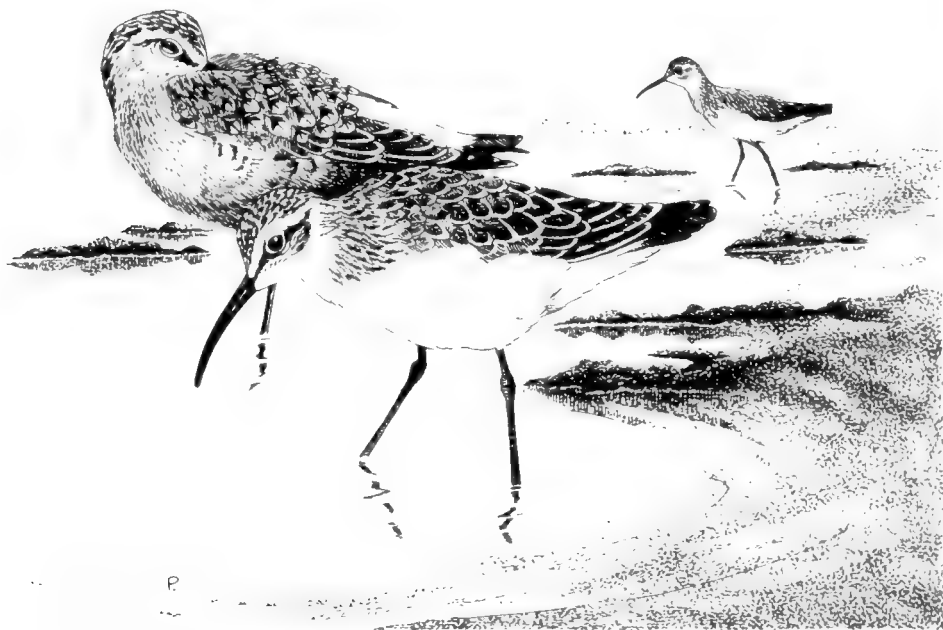
On the principle of whether making changes is necessary, we do have to point out that we regard international standardisation of English names as *inevitable*. Substantial amendments have already been carried out in Australia and the USA and are likely to continue. As numbers of birdwatchers and local ornithological field guides and handbooks increase throughout the English-speaking world, birdwatchers in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australasia and Europe are—not unreasonably—no longer inclined to accept that *Oenanthe oenanthe* is THE Wheatear or *Hirundo rustica* THE Swallow. If we sit back and do nothing, English names decided upon in Johannesburg, Hong Kong or New York will become recognised through worldwide use, whether we like them or not; British ornithology will be isolated, and our insular outlook will become a joke. The names



suggested *for discussion* by the BOURC represent an attempt to ensure that the changes (which we believe are inevitable) are based on principles which are appropriate here in Britain as well as in the rest of the world. We do not necessarily endorse all (or even most) of the proposed name changes, but we do support the BOU's initiative in opening up discussion.

As well as expressions of general approval or disapproval, specific comments, advice, criticism and suggestions on the individual proposed new names will be especially welcomed by the BOURC. Please write to The Secretary, British Ornithologists' Union, c/o British Museum (Natural History), Sub-department of Ornithology, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP. EDS

## August reports



*Ian Dawson and Keith Allsopp*

**These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records. Unless otherwise stated, dates refer to August 1988**

*The unsettled weather experienced in July did not continue into August. High pressure in mid Atlantic brought quiet, but cool northerlies until 4th, when the high-pressure centre moved over the south of England, and warm southerly air arrived to give a taste of summer. Pressure declined after 10th, letting in further unsettled westerly weather until the end of the month, interrupted only briefly by occasional days of anticyclonic weather, mainly in the south of Britain and Ireland.*

### **Curlew Sandpiper influx**

The continuous westerly weather resulted in limited passage of most migrants of eastern origin. It was the more surprising therefore that a notable arrival of **Curlew Sandpipers** *Calidris ferruginea* took place from

25th. After a scatter in Orkney on that date, two flocks the following day totalled 33, with a further 57 on North Ronaldsay on 27th. Cumbria had a reasonable influx of juveniles from 25th onwards; this had developed by the start of September into the best passage there for a number of years. At Titchwell (Norfolk), numbers built up to more than 200, whilst, in Ireland, Tacumshin (Co. Wexford) held 60 on 26th; and there was a wide scattering in English inland counties. Passage of associated species such as **Little Stints** *C. minuta* was generally unexceptional, though a count of 15 at Tacumshin also on 26th was good for that site.

### Tubenoses

A **Black-browed Albatross** *Diomedea melanophris* was seen off Budleigh Salterton (Devon) on 23rd, and a week later an immature passed Porthgwarra (Cornwall), so there is a potential future replacement in the North Atlantic for 'Albert' of Hermanness, missed this year. On 13th, Porthgwarra also had a **Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis* winging past. Pelagic trips aboard the M V *Chalice* to 'Wilson's triangle' in the western approaches, southwest of Land's End (Cornwall), continued throughout the month. Most scored with **Great Shearwater** *P. gravis*, with counts of more than 140 on two of the trips, though **Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea* remains a rare sighting at sea; rather more of this latter species were noted on land-based seawatches, 18 against six. The only notable movement of **Sooty Shearwaters** *P. griseus* was some 1,200 past Brandon Point (Co. Kerry) on 20th.

Only one *Chalice* pelagic failed to see **Wilson's Petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus*, and double figures were reached on four occasions, with 16 the peak. Adding in those seen in late July, the grand total fell just two short of the hundred! The prize of the first 'mega-rarity' on these pioneering voyages, to add to the discovery of the regular Wilson's population, fell to those on the month's first outing when a large, all-dark storm-petrel, initially thought to be Tristram's *Oceanodroma tristrami*, was fortunately photographed on 3rd, subsequently revealing its identity as **Matsudaira's Storm-petrel** *O. matsudairae*.

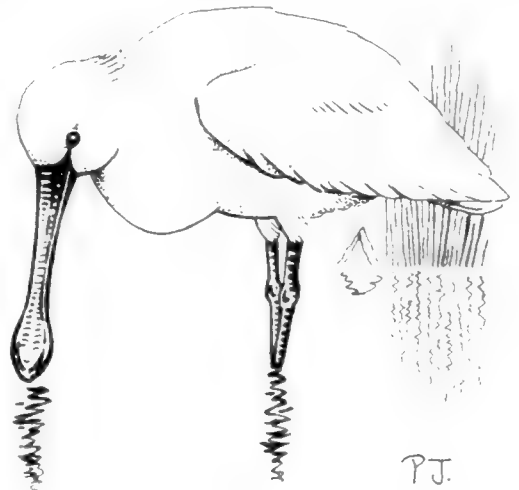
Another 'first' claimed on 27th was an adult **Cape Gannet** *Sula capensis*.

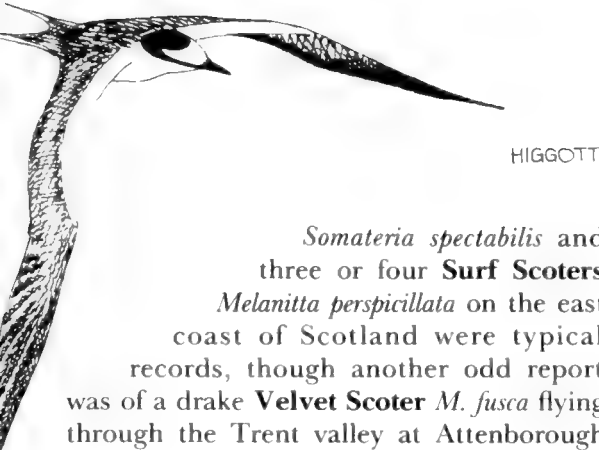
### Hérons to raptors

The only **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* was an elusive juvenile at Holkham (Norfolk)

from 21st, while a **Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* at Marazion (Cornwall) on 11th was early. A scatter of large white birds included half a dozen or more **Little Egrets** *Egretta garzetta* in English south coast counties, with another at Loch Craignish (Strathclyde) late in the month, **Great White Egrets** *E. alba* at Hickling (Norfolk) on 2nd and Dungeness (Kent) on 3rd, a **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* briefly at Minsmere (Suffolk) on 9th, and two **Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* commuting across the Thames between Cliffe (Kent) and East Tilbury (Essex). One or more **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* appeared briefly: near Banbury (Oxfordshire) on 19th, flying over the A1 at Stamford (Lincolnshire) the next day, and in a ploughed field, again adjacent to the A1, at Sandy (Bedfordshire) on 29th.

An eclipse drake **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* turned up with a **Blue-winged Teal** *A. discors* at Teesside (Cleveland) on 29th, though only the former stayed. A drake **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* remained at Kenwith (Devon), and an unseasonal sight at Belvide Reservoir (Staffordshire) was a **Smew** *Mergus albellus*. Two **King Eiders**





HIGGOTT

*Somateria spectabilis* and three or four **Surf Scoters** *Melanitta perspicillata* on the east coast of Scotland were typical records, though another odd report was of a drake **Velvet Scoter** *M. fusca* flying through the Trent valley at Attenborough (Nottinghamshire) on 11th.

Some dozen or more **Ospreys** *Pandion haliaetus* passed over or stayed for a few days on English reservoirs and estuaries.



JPPW

### Crakes to phalaropes

Spread throughout the month were about a dozen **Spotted Crakes** *Porzana porzana*, mostly in wetlands adjacent to the English south and east coast.

**Cranes** *Grus grus* were noted near St Just (Cornwall) on 6th and over Holme (Norfolk) with two on 16th, and presumably the same two flying north past Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire) the same day.

The **Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* remained on Walney Island (Cumbria) to 5th, while an **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* on Stronsay (Orkney) on 24th was refound on 28th, remaining into September, the first in Orkney for 101 years. Most of the 11 **Dotterels** *C. morinellus* appeared in the last week of the month.

August proved to be the best-ever month this side of the Atlantic for **Least Sandpipers** *Calidris minutilla*: an adult was found at Cove Pond (Grampian) from 1st to 4th, followed by another adult at Ballycotton (Co. Cork) from 7th to 12th, an adult at Upton Warren (Hereford & Worcester) from 13th to 15th, and finally one at Steart (Somerset) the following day; perhaps some duplication is involved? Apart from a dozen or so **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos* and a

couple of **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** *Tryngites subruficollis* in Britain, most of the few Nearctic waders were in Ireland: an adult **Baird's Sandpiper** *C. bairdii* at Ballycotton on 9th, three reports of **Stilt Sandpipers** *Micropalama himantopus*, at Lady's Island Lake (Co. Wexford) from 1st to 3rd, at Ballycotton on 7th, and at Kinsale (Co. Cork) from 13th to 17th (plate 352), this last together with a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes*.

A **Marsh Sandpiper** *T. stagnatilis* visited Saltholme Pools (Cleveland) on 20th, and a **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* was near Irvine (Strathclyde) late in the month. There were **Wilson's Phalaropes** *Phalaropus tricolor* at Gibraltar Point early, and Tacumshin late.

### Skuas to Wryneck

Some 20 **Long-tailed Skuas** *Stercorarius longicaudus* included singles inland, at Upton Warren and Church Wilne Reservoir (Derbyshire). **Little Gulls** *Larus minutus* reached a peak of 248 at Seaham (Durham) on 28th, and at least 30 **Mediterranean Gulls** *L. melanocephalus* were widely scattered. **Sabine's Gulls** *L. sabini*, too, showed well, with around 25 on seawatches (plates 348-350) and about double that number seen from the *Chalice* pelagics, including 36 on one voyage late in the month.

In North Wales, the regular **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* showed sporadically. Four **Caspian Terns** *S. caspia* were shared between England, Wales and Ireland, two at Ballycotton (plate 351) from 7th to 9th (one to 13th) doubling the previous Irish total. A **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* was seen at Pett Level (East Sussex) on 15th, while the Farnes **Lesser Crested Tern** *S. bengalensis* was noted at three northeast England localities, as well as at Cley (Norfolk) later in the month.

A **Sooty Tern** *S. fuscata* was on the Ythan Estuary (Grampian) for several hours on 2nd, following late reports of one on three occasions in July at Beadnell Bay (Northumberland). Meanwhile, **Bridled Terns** *S. anaethetus* were off Hartlepool (Cleveland), Coquet Island (Northumberland) and the Great Orme (Gwynedd) in the first half of the month. There were eight typical records of **White-winged Black Terns** *Chlidonias leucopterus*.

Five **Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster* dazzled, and two **Alpine Swifts** *Apus melba* passed through. Six of the nine **Wrynecks** *Jynx torquilla* were on Fair Isle or North Ronaldsay.



346 & 347. Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*, Dorset, August 1988 (Martin S. Garner)

### Passerines

**Sand Martins** *Riparia riparia* were reported as 'extremely common' at Sandwich Bay (Kent), with 500 to 1,000 regularly: nearly 1,000 were ringed there and only a couple retrapped, indicating a steady passage. The **Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* at Corfe Mullen (Dorset) noted in July remained to the early part of the month (plates 346 & 347).

Six of the nine (mostly trapped) **Aquatic Warblers** *Acrocephalus paludicola* turned up between 10th and 16th, the other three from 21st to 23rd, including two on Jersey (Channel Islands). One was trapped at Aberthaw (South Glamorgan) on 10th on the same day as a **Dartford Warbler** *Sylvia undata* there. Nine **Melodious Warblers** *Hippolais polyglotta*, four **Icterine Warblers** *H. icterina* and 13 **Barred Warblers** *Sylvia nisoria* (eight of these in the Northern Isles) in the second half of the month indicate what a poor month it was generally for drift migration of small birds. Only two of these birds, an Icterine Warbler at Minsmere and a Barred Warbler at Landguard (Suffolk), were in East Anglia; indeed there were no reports

even of **Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca* in Suffolk, and fewer than ten each of this species and **Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* at Sandwich Bay.

A **Subalpine Warbler** *S. cantillans* summered on Bardsey (Gwynedd). After one on Fair Isle from 9th, three more **Greenish Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* arrived in Orkney and Shetland on 16th, with further arrivals on Stronsay (Orkney) on 18th and Fair Isle (Shetland) on 27th.

A juvenile **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* was found at St Bride's Wentloog (Gwent) on 29th, and there were four **Scarlet Rosefinches** *Carpodacus erythrinus* in the Northern Isles.

The first **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola* of the autumn was at Sumburgh (Shetland) on 28th. North Ronaldsay's July **Black-headed Bunting** *E. melanocephala* remained to 6th, only to be replaced by another from 14th for the rest of the month. The only **Ortolan Buntings** *E. hortulana* reported were three at Portland (Dorset) around mid month, and one at The Needles (Isle of Wight) on 27th.



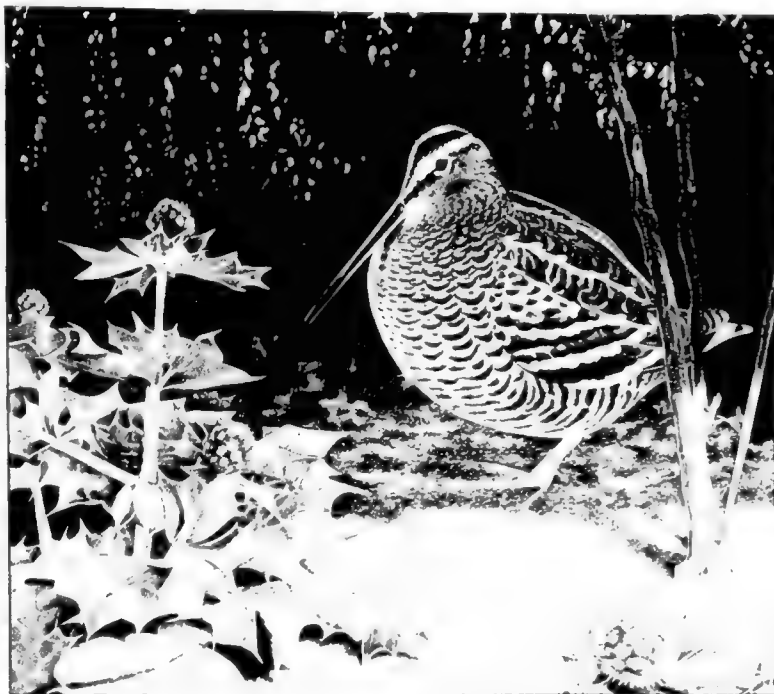
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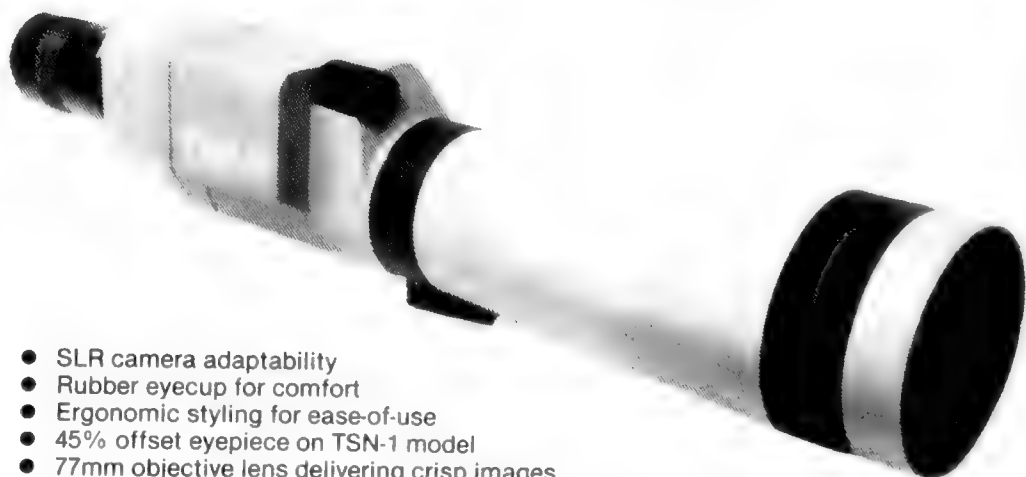
348-350. Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*, Lancashire, August 1988 (B. Marsh)

351. Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*, with Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* and Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*, Co. Cork, August 1988 (Richard T. Mills)





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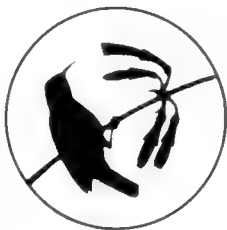
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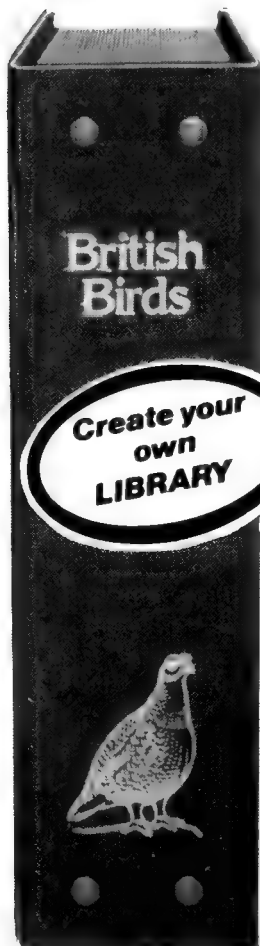
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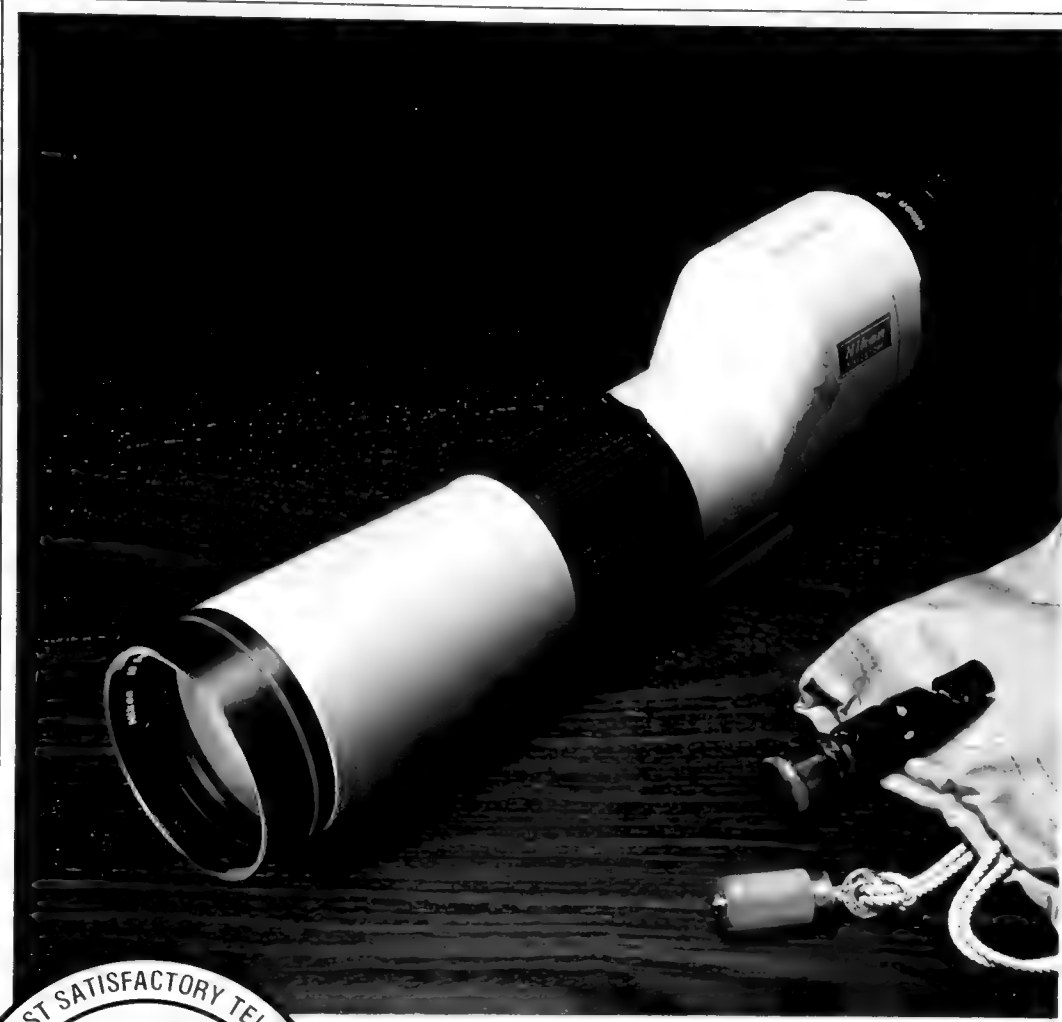
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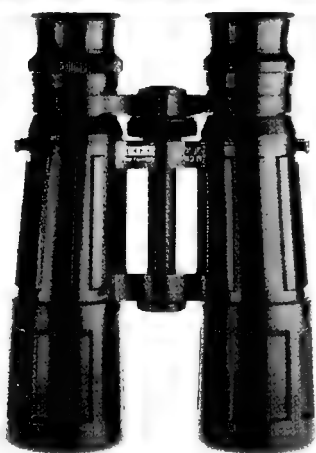
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352. Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus*, Co. Cork, August 1988 (Richard T. Mills)

## Monthly marathon

The first and second puzzle photographs in this third 'Marathon' trail were named by entrants as follows:

Wood Warbler <i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	(80%)
Arctic Warbler <i>P. borealis</i>	(5%)
Chiffchaff <i>P. collybita</i>	(4%)
Tennessee Warbler <i>Vermivora peregrina</i>	(3%)
Sedge Warbler <i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	(2%)
Yellow-browed Warbler <i>P. inornatus</i>	(2%)

with a few entries for Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*, Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*, Melodious Warbler *H. polyglotta*, Greenish Warbler *P. trochiloides* and Bonelli's Warbler *P. bonelli*.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak <i>Pheucticus ludovicianus</i>	(47%)
Reed Bunting <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	(20%)
Redpoll <i>Carduelis flammea</i>	(6%)
Sedge Warbler	(5%)
Twite <i>C. flavirostris</i>	(5%)
Whinchat <i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	(3%)
Spotted Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>	(3%)

with a few entries for Woodlark *Lullula arborea*, Dunnock *Prunella modularis*, Redwing *Turdus iliacus*, Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*, Grasshopper Warbler *L. naevia*, Aquatic Warbler *A. paludicola*, Serin *Serinus serinus*, Linnet *C. cannabina*, Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*, Pine Bunting *E. leucocephalus*, Yellowhammer *E. citrinella*, Rustic Bunting *E. rustica* and Little Bunting *E. pusilla*.

The majority identified the first one correctly: plate 200 did feature a

Sponsored by



Wood Warbler, photographed by Rudi Jelinek in Sweden in May 1985 or 1986.

Entrants who misidentified the bird in plate 215 were doubtless kicking themselves when they received the November issue and saw plate 302, which showed the same female Rose-breasted Grosbeak, photographed by Anthony McGeehan on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, in October 1987.

After these first two photographs, over 150 contestants are still in the chase, with both right. The fifth photograph is shown below (plate 353).



353. Third 'Monthly marathon' competition. Photograph number 5. Identify the species. Read the rules on page 49 in the January 1988 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th January 1989

## Seventy-five years ago...

'CAROLINA CRAKE IN OUTER HEBRIDES. AN immature male Carolina Crake (*Porzana carolina*) was shot by Mr. A. Blain (Galson Lodge, Stornoway), near Ness, Lewis, Outer Hebrides, on November 12th, 1913, and sent to the Natural History Museum in the flesh.' (*Brit. Birds* 7: 202-203, December 1913)

# Reviews

**A Field Guide to the Waders of Britain and Europe with North Africa and the Middle East.** By Peter Colston & Philip Burton. Hodder & Stoughton, Sydney, London, Auckland and Toronto, 1988. 23 colour plates; 95 line-drawings; 53 maps. £9.95.

If you were delighted by Philip Burton's paintings in *BWP* vol. 3 and cannot wait to get your hands on a wader book with all the plates illustrated by him, then you may well be disappointed. All the more so in view of the claim that this book is 'Worth buying for the colour plates alone—undoubtedly the most accurate and beautifully painted and reproduced set of illustrations to be found in any field guide.' Beautiful many of them may be, but they are not as good as his work in *BWP* and they are not all accurate, particularly those where identification criteria have improved in recent years (e.g. stints and sand plovers). A good example is the adult breeding Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*, on which the wing-coverts and tertials are typically mainly grey, but the illustration shows a wing exactly as breeding Little Stint *C. minuta*. It is difficult to believe that an artist of Burton's stature would make such a mistake, and I suspect that these plates were painted some time ago and predated his work for *BWP*.<sup>\*</sup> It is disappointing, too, that juveniles are not depicted for many species. Nevertheless, it would be churlish not to acknowledge that many illustrations, such as the Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax* in a variety of breeding plumages, are excellent and an improvement on other published work.

Further clues to a long gestation period can be found in the text. In the introductory chapter, there are several references to migration studies in the early 1970s, and plumage-dyeing of waders is referred to as a new technique. The bulk of the text is taken up by the species accounts, with one or two pages for each species, covering identification, voice, habitat, distribution, movements, feeding, social and breeding behaviour, and nest, eggs and young. These accounts are up-to-date and they provide a concise summary of information largely dealt with in more detail in *BWP* or *Shorebirds* (Hayman, Marchant & Prater 1986). For species which do not breed in the Western Palearctic, however, some additional information is given on topics such as breeding behaviour.

If this book had been published a few years ago, it would undoubtedly have been welcomed with open arms, but the publishers have to some extent missed the boat. It is not an essential purchase for owners of *BWP* and *Shorebirds*, although they may find it useful for quick reference, for its field-guide portability, for some of the plates and for the limited additional information about species which do not breed in the Western Palearctic. I do recommend it to those whose interests lie beyond identification but who cannot afford *BWP*.

This review may sound a bit critical, but it is made in the context of comparison with *Shorebirds* and *BWP*. A book containing such a wealth of information in a hard cover and with plates on good quality paper is value for money at £9.95, and is certainly worth a look to make up your own mind.

ALAN BROWN

<sup>\*</sup>We understand that this conjecture is correct. Ebs

**The Birds of Africa. vol. III.** Edited by C. Hilary Fry, Stuart Keith and Emil K. Urban. Academic Press, London, 1988. 600 pages; 32 colour plates; many line-drawings and maps. £71.50.

This mammoth work trundles on, and here we have the third volume, even bigger than volume II (which, itself, was larger than volume I). The team of 16 authors, three artists and three editors (the same as for volume II) has managed to produce not only an authoritative and often readable book, but also one which it is a pleasure to use. Although filled with

information, it does not look cramped, the space between paragraphs, the two columns of text and the relatively large type-size all greatly aiding the user to find his or her way around.

This third volume covers the Psittaciformes (parrots and relatives), the Musophagiformes (turacos and relatives), Cuculiformes (cuckoos, etc.), Strigiformes (owls), Caprimulgiformes (nightjars), Apodiformes (swifts), Coliiformes (mousebirds and colies), Coraciiformes (trogons, kingfishers, bee-eaters, rollers, wood-hoopoes, Hoopoe and hornbills), and Piciformes (barbets, honeyguides and woodpeckers).

As an individual book, this volume would merit a very long review. As part of a series, however, we need only remind potential purchasers that *The Birds of Africa* 'will justifiably be regarded as indispensable for anyone having any interest in African birds' (*Brit. Birds* 76: 470) and 'is destined to become the standard work for the Continent' (*Brit. Birds* 80: 58). Martin Woodcock's colour paintings are attractive as well as being informative; and Ian Willis's line-drawings (their accuracy obviously often being derived from photographic reference material) enhance the text pages.

While the price is high, the quality (as well as the size) of the publication make it value for money, and essential for every non-parochial birdwatcher's ornithological library.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

**Where to Watch Birds in Somerset, Avon, Gloucestershire & Wiltshire. By Ken Hall and John Govett.** Christopher Helm, London, 1988. 306 pages; 50 line-drawings; 57 maps. Paperback £9.95.

This, one of a series of regional guides, covers three counties bordering the Severn Estuary and Bristol Channel, plus Wiltshire, which adjoins all three to the east, and details 61 sites or areas. An outline map of the four counties shows the location of each site, but, thereafter, counties are ignored, neither appearing in the site names nor on the site maps.

Each site has headings of Habitat, Timing, Species, Access, and Calendar, and is given a generous average of nearly four pages. The habitat descriptions are sometimes disappointingly brief, barely rising above a topographical outline, and I occasionally found inaccurate or misleading statements. On the other hand, the species sections are comprehensive and well researched, if showing a natural tendency to concentrate on the less usual species which could, perhaps, raise some visiting birders' hopes too high. The section on timing told me when there might be disturbance from fishermen or wildfowlers, which tides are best, and other relevant facts.

The access accounts are first-class, starting from the main road network and ending on the smallest available footpath. No-one should get lost just using the text, but the site maps, tediously grouped at the end of the book and, incidentally, with non-corresponding numbering, are much less useful. Although one applauds the obvious desire for simplicity and legibility, some indication of built-up areas and better differentiation between main and minor roads would have helped.

The final, calendar, section for each site is essentially a summary of the much longer species section, sub-divided by seasons.

Some of the line-drawings are quite pleasing, but several fail to convey the real look of the bird. The Ring-necked Duck on page 197 is surely a hybrid *Aythya*, with a head like that!

The book concludes with a handful of also-ran sites, treated in brief, a key to the commoner abbreviations (RSPB, BTO, WT, etc.), and a curious glossary. Defining 'crepuscular' and 'irruption' might be felt useful, but 'dabbling duck'? 'Seabird'? and 'wader'? The bird-name index, heavily biased away from the commoner species, gives the number of each site where a particular species might be seen. For this to have been properly helpful, the site numbers should have been repeated in the running heads along the top of each page instead of just once at the beginning of each account.

The book is fairly cheaply produced, and one wonders how long the thin card covers and glued, not stitched, binding will stand up to frequent use. For, despite some essentially minor shortcomings, this is a very worthwhile guide, which should be useful to residents in the area as well as to visitors.

M. A. OGILVIE

**Where to Watch Birds in the West Midlands: including Hereford-Worcester, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and the former West Midlands County.** By Graham Harrison and Jack Sankey. Christopher Helm, London, 1987. 275 pages; 25 line-drawings; 53 maps. Paperback £9.95.

Please forgive the following burst of egocentric nostalgia.

It was sometime early in 1962 that I 'discovered' Upton Warren. I was, at the time, immersed in research for my historic thesis on the Birds of Bartley Reservoir, and I spent many hours in the Birmingham Reference Library poring through ancient dog-eared copies of the West Midland Bird Club annual report. In them, I happened to notice several pre-war or wartime references to somewhere called Upton Warren, and records of water birds there that were pretty good for the area: scoters, divers, rarer grebes and so on. And yet, this was the first I'd ever heard of the place. Did it still exist? I bought an OS map and found the town of Upton, but there was no little blue patch nearby. Oh well, I concluded, the water must have been filled in. But no . . . one wintry day early in the swinging sixties, I was driving in the countryside near Bromsgrove when I spied a small cluster of yacht masts huddled around a fair-sized 'pit', and through the adjacent hedgerow I could see the glint of another quite large pool. On the water were wildfowl, over it were gulls and nearby was a signpost: 'Upton Warren'. From then on, I dropped in now and then (and so did a Great Northern Diver), but it was nearly a year later when a family of Bewick's Swans circled over me and pitched down on what turned out to be Upton's true delight: three shallow pools hidden away 'at the back', perfect for fowl and waders.

So it was that Upton became my 'local patch' in the early sixties. I saw a lot of good birds there, but it was nearly another year again before I saw another birdwatcher.

It couldn't happen today, could it? Is there honestly a single place left to discover in the whole of Britain, let alone in the West Midlands? Buy this book and look up Upton Warren . . . there's five pages on it, plus a plan of every puddle and tree and instructions on how to get there, where to park, and which hides to watch from. Yep, I said 'hides'! Good grief! We had to skulk behind hawthorn bushes in my day. They even tell you what birds you're likely to see. The truth is, Upton is now one of the Midlands' prime 'sites'—how I hate that word!—and it's visited by hundreds of people—sometimes on one day. (It's even been on 'Birdline'!)

I suppose I should be pleased—proud almost?—and in a way I am. After all, Upton is probably now 'safe'. Public awareness of the importance of sites (as in SSSIs) means they stand a better chance of protection and preservation.

And yet . . . call me a sentimental old thing if you like, but I can't help mourning the passing of the patch. Not only is it now almost impossible to find anywhere you can 'call your own', but if you find a decent bird on it you can look forward (or would you?) to an invasion of twitchers. I've nothing against twitchers either, but . . . oh well, yes I *am* a sentimental old thing.

I'm sorry—this was meant to be a book review wasn't it? Another in Helm's 'Where to Watch Birds' series . . . this time, the West Midlands. Is it any good? 'Course it is. Comprehensive, authoritative, well illustrated, indispensable even if you're a Midlands' birder.

If only it'd been available back in the early sixties . . . I wouldn't have had half as much fun.

BILL ODDIE

**The Pheasant: ecology, management and conservation.** By David Hill and Peter Robertson. BSP Professional Books, Oxford, 1988. 281 pages; 9 colour plates; 16 black-and-white plates; 13 line-drawings. £17.95.

Although ignored or despised by many birdwatchers, the Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* is certainly one of the (and perhaps the) most important species of birds in Britain, with huge areas of England managed, modified or remaining unchanged largely for its benefit. It is wholly appropriate, therefore, that there should be a monograph on this species, even though it is an alien in our midst, having been introduced here (probably by the Normans, rather than by the Romans). As the authors point out in their Introduction, the money spent



annually on game-shooting in Britain (largely Pheasant-shooting) is more than ten times the entire budget of the Nature Conservancy Council.

The text is based to a large degree on the authors' own research, with the data being presented very much in the form one expects of scientific papers rather than popular monographs. This seems an opportunity lost, for the rather numerous histograms, graphs, scatter diagrams, tables and statistics seem likely to deter purchasers from amongst the people most interested in the Pheasant (those involved in its management and shooting), while those who would welcome such detail are likely already to have seen the information in the scientific journals. It is, however, useful to have much material drawn together in this single volume (there is a 15-page bibliography). The authors' hard work, however, has not been well served by their publishers, for the text would have benefited greatly from additional editorial attention to improve its readability (especially for the benefit of the non-scientific reader).

None of the above criticisms will, however, deter all gamebird enthusiasts from adding this volume to their bookshelves.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

**The Natural History of Bardsey.** By Peter Hope Jones. National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, 1988. 149 pages; 18 black-and-white plates; 13 line-drawings. £10.95.

Although there are two chapters (40 pages) on birds: 'Breeding birds' and 'Bird passage migrants', this book does not include a full systematic list of birds recorded on the island (not necessary, with *The Birds of Bardsey* recently published: review *Brit. Birds* 79: 103-104). This book concentrates on all the other groups of animals and plants, the island's geology, soils, climate, and human influences.

Unlike some other such books, the photographic reproduction is excellent, so that the black-and-white views of Bardsey's scenery bring the whole area to life for the reader.

Personally, I found the lack of a checklist for each group a distinct disadvantage. I wondered, for instance, whether the insectivorous plants sundew *Drosera* and butterwort *Pinguicula* occurred on Bardsey, as they do on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, but neither was included in the index; I do not know, therefore, whether they do not occur, or whether they occur but are not mentioned in the book. Nevertheless, each group receives an interesting write-up, and every Bardsey aficionado will wish to own a copy of this well-produced volume.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

**The Quails, Partridges, and Francolins of the World.** By Paul A. Johnsgard. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988. 264 pages; 127 colour plates; 42 distribution maps. £47.50.

In this companion volume to his *The Pheasants of the World* (1986; review, *Brit. Birds* 79: 510), Professor Johnsgard tackles another group of the world's birds, illustrated in the main by colour paintings by Major Henry Jones in the collection owned by the Zoological Society of London. With more species (134), the individual species texts are briefer than those of *The Pheasants*, with no detailed plumage descriptions. The information on each species is summarised under measurements, identification (in the field and in the hand), general biology and ecology, reproductive biology, evolutionary relationships, and status and conservation outlook. Distributions are shown on individual maps, each of which displays the ranges of several species/subspecies. Well laid out, easy to use, and with a ten-page bibliography, this book is a very worthwhile addition to the series of ornithological reference books produced in recent years by Oxford University Press.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

**Soviet Bird Songs.** By Krister Mild. Krister Mild bioacoustics, Stockholm. 1987. Two cassettes and booklet (68 pages). £19.95.

The publication of a set of Soviet bird songs is an all-too-rare event outside the USSR. There are of course various recordings of Soviet birds on the comprehensive set of 16 cassettes by Palmér & Boswall, but this new collection is rather different. The two cassettes cover 122 species, about 16% of the country's avifauna, and all the recordings except two were made in the USSR in May/June 1987. The author's visit was centred on

six cities in Siberia and Central Asia plus the obligatory stay in Moscow. The species included are deliberately mainly those not found on European bird song records although some common European species are included where the USSR populations are of a different subspecies. Inevitably, one can disagree with the choice of species on such compilations, but on the whole the selection here is a good one. I will not personally find recordings of Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Swift *Apus apus* and Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* particularly useful whereas I was disappointed not to find Siberian Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica* and Turkestan Great Tit *Parus bokharensis* included (presumably because the author was not able to record these species on his short visit). We are told that recording was not the main purpose of the author's visit, and that some areas were visited only briefly. With very few exceptions, the recordings are of a high standard although some poor cuts have been included for the sake of completeness or because they are not to be found on other records or tapes. Thus, the author has succeeded well in his aim to provide a useful tool to enable the field ornithologist to identify poorly known species, rather than to supply high-quality recordings.

The total playing time is 2 hours 46 minutes (more than 40 minutes per side) and each species is introduced with a number and the bird's English name. The accompanying booklet is most comprehensive; every species is given its scientific name (with trinomial if appropriate), and English and Swedish names. Information for each recording includes place and date of recording, description of song/call, activity of the bird, background species and noises, and length of time of recording. For less familiar species, a brief description of the bird's habitat is also given (but why not for Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*?). In the case of Rufous-tailed Robin *Luscinia sibilans* the bird is correctly described as shy and skulking, and found in coniferous forest with thickets, but there is no mention that singing males are often conspicuous from the tops of the conifers, which is the best chance of locating this elusive bird. Taxonomy is discussed for a few species, and for some the author gives us his own views. One of the taxonomic notes concerns Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*, whose western and eastern populations may well represent different species, but it is a shame there is no recording of the western form (which occurs in Moscow) for comparison. The booklet also describes in detail the equipment used to produce the recordings. There are a few typos and some excusable English and spelling errors.

The author is to be congratulated on producing these fine cassettes. The presentation is truly outstanding, and I hope that other bird sound-recordists will follow his example—there must be thousands of recordings of little-known birds hidden away on private cassettes which never see the light of day. This set will be useful mainly to those fortunate enough to visit the more accessible parts of Siberia and Central Asia (and a good proportion of the birds likely to be encountered are included), but the calls of some may also be helpful when looking for vagrants in Europe.

NIGEL REDMAN

**Reader's Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds. 2nd edition.** Reader's Digest Services, Sydney, 1986. 640 pages; 745 colour photographs; 654 distribution maps. £30.00.

This is an eye-opening introduction to Australian birds. The 745 colour photographs depict all but nine of the 672 bird species which breed in or regularly visit Australia. Many of the photographs are stunning works of art in their own right, and the colour reproduction is excellent throughout. There is usually only one photograph for each species, although a number of those which have very different male/female or adult/immature plumages are shown by two or more photographs. The text (usually about half a page per species) covers identification, voice, nest and breeding details and distribution, with very clear distribution maps (although it is a pity that breeding, wintering, and passage areas are not distinguished).

This is far from being 'an Australian BWP', but is much more than a field guide. I can imagine its appealing to a vast number of Australians who have an interest in wildlife but are not ornithologists or regular birdwatchers; it would also be a very good primer for the birder planning to visit Australia. What is perhaps amazing is that there is not a book at this level with this quality of illustration covering European birds.

Australia has some exquisitely beautiful birds, to which the photographs in this book do full justice. Even the 'plain brown jobs' can, however, be startlingly attractive, and, if you do decide to browse through this book in a bookshop before buying it, have a look at the Little Wattlebird *Anthochaera lunulata* feeding on nectar and pollen from dryandra flowers on page 492: one of the most beautiful of bird portraits, in a book which abounds in splendid pictures.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

**Tetrad Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Devon. Compiled by H. P. Sitters.** Devon Bird Watching and Preservation Society, Yelverton, 1988. 334 pages; 21 black-and-white plates; 128 line-drawings; 123 distribution maps. £18.00.

With over 1,800 tetrads (2 km × 2 km squares) in Devon, organisation of a breeding bird atlas based on those units is equivalent to that for a national atlas based on 10-km squares. This book does the project justice, having the appearance, 'feel' and standard of presentation of the best national atlases.

Each double-page spread consists of a page of text, with the obligatory line-drawings (by Mike Langman and Alan Lawrence), and the facing page largely occupied by the relevant red-on-black distribution map. Squares of three sizes are used (in place of the usual dots of three sizes) to indicate possible, probable and confirmed breeding. The editor/organiser's close association with the BTO is plain, with the frequent use of Common Bird Census and Waterways Survey information in the form of graphs. These introduce my *only* criticism of this splendid book: I have a personal abhorrence of the use of graphs in which the baseline is not zero. Many of these graphs showing population trends appear to show much greater percentage change than is in fact the case, since the baseline varies from species to species (the CBC Index for Coal Tit *Parus ater*, for example, appears to increase about 40-fold, since the baseline chosen is 80 rather than 0, whereas the actual increase is about three-fold between 1965 and 1985).

Very much on the 'plus' side is the inclusion of histograms showing the altitudinal distribution of the records (percentage of tetrads occupied at each 50-m level), divided into confirmed, probable and possible breeding.

The texts (by over 40 authors) are interesting and informative, generally concentrating on aspects relevant to each bird's distribution in Devon, but putting this into a British context. There are two innovative features: a series of comparison maps (e.g. common fumitory *Fumaria officinalis* and Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*; Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* and Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*) and a series of histograms showing the distribution of occupied tetrads according to five grades of agricultural land quality.

This was a very thorough and efficient survey, and the resulting book is a highly professional piece of work, strongly to be recommended to anyone with an interest in atlas distributional studies or the birds of the county of Devon.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

**Where to Watch Birds in Kent, Surrey & Sussex. By Don Taylor, Jeffery Wheatley and Tony Prater.** Christopher Helm, London, 1987. 270 pages; 35 line-drawings; 41 maps. £9.95.

As a schoolboy birdwatcher (there were no birders in the mid-'60s!), I was a regular visitor to Stodmarsh: rarely did I see another person with binoculars, and usually I had the Bearded Tits or Garganeys all to myself. By the early 1970s, Stodmarsh's charms had been discovered by scores of birdwatchers, and I always wondered whether John Gooders' pioneering *Where to Watch Birds* (1967) was responsible. Now, more than 20 years later, comes the welcome arrival of a series of highly detailed *Where to Watch* guides from Christopher Helm. Even to those who know Kent, Surrey and Sussex well, the trio of authors is sure to introduce you to a whole spectrum of new sites in what is, ornithologically, one of the most productive corners of Britain.

The authors have made a good job of describing each site, providing an Ordnance Survey map reference, an outline of the habitat, the species to expect, the best timing for the visit, access to the area, and a calendar of species. I am delighted to see that other attractions are also noted: at Sandwich Bay, for example, we are told that nine species of orchids occur, including the lizard orchid, and that this is a good place to see migrant

butterflies. Inevitably, one could argue that certain sites should have been included, others left out. The Sevenoaks Wildfowl Refuge, for example, one of a handful of reserves in Kent with a full-time warden and proper hides, merits no more of a mention than in the appendix of 'Additional Sites', to where poor old Beddington Sewage-farm (now long past its bird-rich prime) is also relegated.

However, one can but applaud the authors for doing their job well, while the line-drawings, by a variety of artists, are all pleasing to the eye. Alas, authors and artists have not been so well served by their publisher. A soft cover and poor-quality paper and printing make the book look expensive at almost £10, and this is not the sort of volume that will stand up to even moderately hard use without falling to bits. No praise, either, for the book's designer. Crowded pages are not easy on the eye, while printing all the maps in a group at the back gives the book a disjointed feel. Sadly, the October 1987 hurricane has also made this work out of date within days of publication, as most of the major woodlands mentioned have been altered out of all recognition.

DAVID TOMLINSON

**A Synopsis of the Avifauna of China.** By Cheng Tso-Hsin. Paul Parey, Hamburg & Berlin, 1987. 1,239 pages; 828 distribution maps. DM258.00.

This huge book (it weighs 2.7 kg) is an updated version of the *Distributional List of Chinese Birds* (1955, 1958), not only revised and enlarged, but also now published for the first time in English. Usefully, the species' names are given in Chinese and Russian (as well as English), and there is a gazetteer with Chinese and English names.

As well as descriptions of range (of breeding, passage and wintering areas), the distribution of most species is mapped, with breeding and wintering ranges shown separately, and, where appropriate, each race shown by a different symbol.

Usefully, the symbols showing races are placed in the exact positions where specimens were obtained, so that, in this respect, the maps present factual information rather than conjecture. One or two lines are devoted to habitat, and status is summarised briefly, often with just one or two words. A total of 1,186 species (plus a further 953 distinct subspecies) is included, the area covering not only the People's Republic of China, but also Taiwan and neighbouring islands.

This is an essential work of reference for anyone interested in birdwatching in China or the distribution of birds in the Far East.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

**The Gwent Atlas of Breeding Birds: an atlas of breeding birds in the county of Gwent from 1981-85.** By Stephanie Tyler, Jerry Lewis, Al Venables and John Walton. Gwent Ornithological Society, 1987. 146 pages; 120 line-drawings; 115 maps. Paperback £5.99; hardback £11.99.

'Gwent is a small and essentially rural county of approximately 137,600 hectares in area.' Extending into only 25 10-km squares, there are some 400 tetrads, of which 388 were surveyed during 1981-85 by approximately 100 birdwatchers. This well-produced *Atlas* is the result, presenting the information obtained clearly (by three sizes of large orange dot on grid maps), with short, helpful texts and the usual varied and interesting line-drawings (by 11 artists, most by Stephen Roberts and Jean Wilder) of each species (one species per page).

The value of these detailed, tetrad breeding-bird atlases is already well established. Ornithologists in Gwent in the future will have this valuable 'snapshot' of bird distributions in the early 1980s with which to compare repeat surveys. Present-day Gwent ornithologists have an attractive volume, which they will surely *all* want to own.

The 1981-85 survey brought the discovery of the first known nesting in Gwent of Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* and Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*, but none of Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*, Short-eared Owl *A. flammeus*, Woodlark *Lullula arborea*, Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* or Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*. Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* 'made a dramatic come-back' and Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*, Siskin *Carduelis spinus*, Redpoll *C. flammea* and Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* were 'all more widespread than had been previously suspected.'

J. T. R. SHARROCK

# Short reviews

**The Dragonflies of Europe.** By R. R. Askew. (Harley Books, Great Horkesley, 1988. 291 pages. £49.95) Every species meticulously illustrated in colour with the text covering description of the adult, biology (behaviour, jizz, habitat, etc.), flight period and distribution, with a quarter-page distribution map covering Europe and North Africa. As always with this publisher, beautifully produced.

**Der Zaunkönig.** By Manfred Dallmann. (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei 577, A. Ziemsen Verlag 1987. Paperback DM10.00) Dealing with the Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, this is number 577 in this incredible series of paperback monographs, which is an essential source of reference for anyone studying any of the species. As usual, the text is wholly in German.

**Atlas of Victorian Birds.** By W. B. Emison, C. M. Beardsell, F. I. Norman, R. H. Loyn. Graphics and analyses by S. C. Bennett. (Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands & RAOU, Melbourne, 1987. 271 pages. Paperback A\$25.00) I have never visited this area of Australia, do not know the birds, and they are not illustrated, but I could (and have) spent hours browsing, reading and wondering in this rich mine of information. Records collected during 1973 to 1986, by members of the RAOU and the National Parks and Wildlife Division of Victoria of the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, are plotted by 10-minute blocks (rectangles of 10 minutes latitude by 10 minutes longitude), with separate maps for occurrence and for breeding; and there are histograms showing monthly reporting rates, and short but very informative texts interpreting the maps and giving interesting comments. Some 450 species are covered, with half a page devoted to each. Anyone visiting Melbourne or the State of Victoria or having any interest in atlases will find this well-produced, large-format paperback not only useful for reference, but also crammed with fascinating, thought-provoking and well-presented information.

**Popular Garden Birds.** By Joe Firmin. (Foulsham, Slough, 1988. 96 pages. Paperback £3.99) A little book with some

helpful advice on how to attract birds to a garden, but I am not sure that I agree that: 'The illustrations . . . should also prove helpful in identifying visitors to your garden'; some, such as that of the Dunnock *Prunella modularis*, are almost unrecognisable. Forty species are illustrated, and Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* and Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* will indeed be 'popular' if they visit *my* garden.

**Les Oiseaux du Lac Léman.** By Paul Géroutet. (Nos Oiseaux, Prangins, 1987. 344 pages. Swiss Fr. 75.00). Lac Léman or Lake Geneva, with a surface area of 582 km<sup>2</sup>, is by far the largest, and most important, of the lakes of central Europe. It attracts considerable numbers of birds, as this splendid book makes abundantly clear. M. Géroutet has been watching the birds of Lac Léman for over 50 years, and this volume includes numerous entries from his diary: such as his first Red-breasted Merganser in November 1933, and Eider in October 1936. It is exclusively about the birds of the lake (those which get their feet wet), and not about the species of the surrounding countryside. Robert Hainard's delightful engravings and line-drawings enliven a book which is fascinating to look through, even for those who failed French 'O' level. Did you know the lake has a large population of Goosanders *Mergus merganser*, or that Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* has been recorded there? [DAVID TOMLINSON]

**One Man's Owl.** By Bernd Heinrich. (Princeton University Press, Princeton. 1987. 224 pages. £12.20) Diary of the rearing of an orphaned Great Horned Owl *Bubo virginianus* through to its release in the woods of Maine, USA. Some interesting details cover behaviour, feather development and moult. An enjoyable read, but the serious student will constantly ask 'How does the behaviour of this semi-tame owl relate to that of a wild bird?'

[DAVID GLUE]

**Why Not Eat Insects?** By Vincent M. Holt. (Classey and British Museum (Natural History), 1988. 99 pages. Paperback £3.95)

Small, but humorous reprint of nineteenth-century insectivore's almanac, with modern introduction questioning Western taboos. Tempting dinner menus include 'new carrots with wireworm sauce' and 'devilled chafer grubs'. [MB]

**Check-list of the Birds of Israel.** By **Haim Hovel.** (Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, 1987. 192 pages. Paperback £9.50) An annotated list of 479 species (Voous sequence) recorded in Israel and Sinai up to December 1984, with some 1985 data. Includes a large pull-out map and a 5½-page gazetteer giving co-ordinates. For all species and all subspecies, world range is given, along with status in Israel. Subspecies are important in this region, but there seems some confusion over Tawny/Steppe Eagle *Aquila rapax/nipalensis* (treated as one species here): surely the sedentary northern African race *belisarius* is not an 'Uncommon passage visitor', in both seasons? *Larus argentatus armenicus* is not mentioned, but this distinctive race of Herring Gull (or full species?) certainly occurs on the Mediterranean coast of Israel at least. Small Skylark (=Oriental Skylark) *Alauda gulgula* is said to be an accidental visitor, and Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* a rare to scarce passage visitor in March to May: perhaps such inadequacies are due to the time at which compilation of data ceased. With so much fieldwork current in Israel, it is hardly surprising that this list is already somewhat out of date; nevertheless, this is a most welcome publication. [DAC]

**A Birdwatchers' Guide to Nepal.** By **Carol Inskipp.** (Prion, Sandy, 1988. 115 pages. Paperback £8.75) Any birdwatcher who embarks on a journey to Nepal without this book is off to a bad start! The author's intimate knowledge of this fascinating country is succinctly condensed into the pages of an indispensable guide, and the two main sections, Kathmandu Valley and the major trekking routes, are very detailed. There are sections on travel, accommodation, climate and clothing, as well as complete checklists of birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles. Having made three visits to the region, I found the information easy to relate to and cannot recommend the book too highly.

[JOHN R. MATHER]

**The Owls of Southern Africa.** Text by **Alan Kemp.** Paintings by **Simon Calburn.** (Struik Winchester, Cape Town, 1987. 184 pages. £37.50) Was this book intended as a vehicle for the artist that the publisher tried to push to a higher status by using a well-known ornithologist to write the text? Whichever way it came about, it has become a grossly over-priced 'coffee-table' book, dealing, in just 184 pages (six of which list subscribers to the various editions), with the 12 species of owls occurring in Southern Africa.

[NORMAN ARLOTT]

**The Flow Country: the peatlands of Caithness and Sutherland.** By **R. A. Lindsay, D. J. Charman, F. Everingham, R. M. O'Reilly, M. A. Palmer, T. A. Rowell and D. A. Stroud.** Edited by **D. A. Ratcliffe and P. H. Oswald.** (Nature Conservancy Council, Peterborough, 1988. 174 pages. Paperback £13.50) This companion volume to *Birds, Bogs and Forestry* (1987; reviewed *Brit. Birds* 81: 193-194) gives the facts and the figures (with maps, histograms, graphs and tables) which show the importance of this area botanically and zoologically. The ornithological value of the area is detailed in one eight-page section. This report, which took 18 months to compile, summarises detailed surveys which extended over several years.

**Rabbits and Hares.** By **Anne McBride.** (Whittet Books, London, 1988. 128 pages. £5.95) All about them (including lots which I didn't know), written in easy-to-read style, with many excellent, instructive drawings by Guy Troughton. Dr McBride's text is authoritative, but never boring, and, in my view, did not need the inclusion of cartoons (also by Guy Troughton), although this is the series-style.

**A Lighthouse Notebook.** By **Norman McCanch.** (Penguin Group, London, 1988. 195 pages. £9.95) Paperback version of book originally published in 1985 (reviewed *Brit. Birds* 78: 524).

**The Bird Biographies of W. H. Hudson.** Foreword by **Jonathan Maslow.** (Capra Press, Santa Barbara, 1988. 208 pages. Paperback \$9.95) Hudson left Argentina in 1874; and his second South American book (*Birds of La Plata*) was published in 1920, shortly before his death. In the present anthology, his fieldnotes on 49 species have been extracted and presented as



individual chapters. These accounts are now somewhat dated, though their charm remains. [ROBERT HUDSON]

**The Countryside Encyclopædia.** By **Richard Muir.** (Macmillan, London, 1988. 240 pages. £14.95) A better title might be 'An Encyclopedia to Rural Britain', for this book is concerned with the traces that man has left on the countryside, rather than with its natural history. It is, however, a splendid book for browsing or for looking up items such as clapper bridges, hill figures, long barrows, pargetting, souterrain, tofts, and so on. Well and usefully illustrated.

**Die Ohrenlerche.** By **Rudolf Pätzold.** (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei 586, A. Ziemsen Verlag 1987. Paperback DM16.00) German paperback monograph on Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris* (see review of Dallmann, above.)

**Let's Listen to the Passerines of Britain and Europe. Nos. 1, 2 and 3.** By **Daniel Jean Pernin** (Daniel J. Pernin, France, 1987. £5.50 each). **Let's Listen to 41 Common Birds of Britain** (£5.20). **Le Chant de Nos Oiseaux No. 4** (£6.50) These bird-song cassettes are by no means comprehensive, but most common West European lowland songsters are here, beautifully recorded, with no unwanted background sounds. An average of two minutes is given to each species, usually with several examples of both song and calls. The announcements, in English, by a seductive French female voice, add to the charm. My only gripe is the lack of data given on the card insert, with no indication of where or when the recordings were made. The passerine set covers 75 species, of which those duplicated on the other two tapes appear to be represented by the same recordings; but each tape, with a good variety of families represented, stands by itself for pleasurable and informative listening. [IAN DAWSON]

**Nature Photography Yearbook 1988-89.** Edited by **Fritz Pölking.** (Fountain Press, Tolworth, 1988. 120 pages. £14.95) The format of this volume follows that of previous publications in this annual series (reviews: *Brit. Birds* 78: 610; 81: 191), with

wonderful photographs occupying one page and the captions and brief details of the photographers, in eight languages (including English), on the facing page. As usual, the photographs range from ice formations to atmospheric scenic shots, and close-ups of insects to birds and mammals in action. The wide variety of subjects is part of the appeal of this annual selection. Work by over 40 photographers from 13 countries is included (16 from Germany, eight from Finland, and five each from the Netherlands and Switzerland); only three British photographers are included—Laurie Campbell (Puffin), Dennis Green (Choughs) and Richard Revels (fungi)—but the foreword is written by David Hosking.

**Der Steinrötel.** By **Egon Schmidt and Tibor Farkas.** (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei 478, A. Ziemsen Verlag 1987. Paperback DM10.80) German paperback monograph on Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* (see review of Dallmann, above.)

**A Study of Blackbirds.** By **D. W. Snow.** (British Museum (Natural History), London, 1988. 196 pages. Paperback £7.95) Partly, perhaps, because they are so visible on everyone's lawns, Blackbirds seem to engage in more interesting activities than almost any other species. This account, based on Dr Snow's studies of the population in the Oxford Botanic Gardens, was first published in 1958 (review: *Brit. Birds* 51: 429-430). A three-page 'postscript' covers important new points from the literature. The book is enhanced by Robert Gillmor's drawings. The BM(NH) is to be congratulated on making this new paperback version available.

**Go Birding!** Edited by **Tony Soper.** (BBC Books, London, 1988. 182 pages. Paperback £4.95) Published to accompany six 30-minute BBC TV programmes, this book covers a wide variety of topics aimed at the interested amateur or would-be birdwatcher, with chapters by Patrick Thompson, David Wingfield Gibbons, Peter Grant, Mike Moser & Robert Prýs-Jones, Chris Mead and Bob Scott. As one would expect of a book master-minded by the BTO, this is crammed with reliable facts and good advice. The low price will make it accessible to those to whom it will be of most use.



**Birdwatcher's Year.** By Ann Tate. (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1988. 200 pages. £12.95.) Written in diary form, we follow Ann Tate through the seasons on her birdwatching outings, and share her experiences. Manx Shearwaters *Puffinus puffinus* at night on Skokholm; Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* at Leighton Moss; Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* soaring above the Isle of Arran. Packed with information on locations, habitat and wildlife, this charming book will encourage and inspire every reader.

[BONNY SHIRLEY]

**Exploration of a Drowned Landscape: archaeology and history of the Isles of Scilly.** By Charles Thomas. (Batsford, London, 1985. 320 pages. Paperback, £12.95) An astonishingly comprehensive and detailed study which cannot fail to fascinate. It deals with everything from the paved causeway from Bar Point to St Martin's, and how Holy Vale got its name (hybrid Old Cornish and Norman, meaning 'marshy valley'), to something which the Check List did not include, the bones of White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* and Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* on Nornour. It is not aimed at the birder, but is a must for the aficionado.

[MIKE ROGERS]

**The Sound of Nature: Nightingale.** By Walter Tilgner. (Natural Sound/Wergo, Mainz, West Germany, 1987. CD SM9002-50. DM39.00) Very few bird-song recordings have been published on compact disc and this one, recorded digitally by Walter Tilgner in May 1983 in the Bodensee region of Southern Germany, would convince any listener of the value of this medium. The sound of this Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* is superb, with astonishing reproduction of its complex song, without any distortion. There are two bands, each of 29 minutes; the first features just the Nightingale at dead of night and the second, recorded at dawn, gives an impression of increasing daylight as other birds start to sing with the Nightingale and a rising wind blows through reeds and ripples the water. A natural feeling of depth and atmosphere contribute enormously to the enjoyment to be gained from this disc.

[RJP]

**Bobby Tulloch's Shetland: an islander, his islands and their wildlife.** By Bobby Tulloch. (Macmillan, London, 1988. £14.95) Even without Bobby Tulloch's evocative photographs and fascinating

text, it is worth picking up this book to read the original and highly entertaining Introduction by Lord Grimond, who obviously has contacts in high places. The insight into Shetland life revealed by Bobby Tulloch's autobiographical anecdotes and portrayed by his photographs will be appreciated by everyone who knows Shetland, and will help those who have not been there to understand its attractions to those who live among or who visit the 100 islands in the archipelago. I enjoyed reading it even more than I expected (and that is saying something).

**The Birds of Sumatra.** By J. G. van Marle and Karel H. Voous. (British Ornithologists' Union, Tring, 1988. 265 pages. Paperback £16.00; £18.00 overseas.) The introductory chapters give interesting historical, geographical and ecological backgrounds of Sumatran ornithology. The endemic species of Sumatra (12) and its offshore islands (4) are discussed and listed in tables. The historical part includes a list of 161 major expeditions from 1812 to 1986. The body of this book (which is no. 10 in the BOU's series) consists of an annotated check-list, in which widely scattered data are brought together, including unpublished information. A useful gazetteer of localities and a handy summary bird list concludes this excellent work, essential for anybody concerned with the avian geography of Sumatra and the Sunda region.

[ARNOUD B. VAN DEN BERG]

**Le Pigeon Voyageur.** By Henri Vindevoel, Jean-Pierre Duchatel and Paul-Pierre Pastoret. (Éditions du Point Vétérinaire, Maisons-Alfort, 1987. 176 pages. Paperback F180) Rock Doves *Columba livia*—or rather 'racing pigeons'—in French, including colour photographs of some of the horrible diseases to which they seem prone.

**Birds of Hong Kong.** By Clive Viney and Karen Phillipps. (Government Printer, Hong Kong, 1988. Fourth edn. 214 pages. Paperback US\$15; HK\$80) Despite the different title, this is the fourth edition of this book (previous reviews: *Brit. Birds* 71: 316-317; 77: 281). This edition is 20 pages longer and has new plates of woodpeckers and some hill birds, and four other plates have been repainted. The text and illustrations now cover not only the birds of Hong Kong itself, but also those which occur in neighbouring areas and which may well turn up in Hong Kong in the future.

**Studies of the Wild Turkey in Florida.** By Lovett E. Williams Jr and David H. Austin. (University Presses of Florida, Gainesville, 1988. 232 pages. \$27.50) This should be a useful work of reference for Wild Turkey specialists, managers of large game-birds and academic reviewers of gallinaceous minutiae. It contains mostly previously unpublished details from 22 studies in Florida during 1966-82. The book specifically excludes much published information and makes no attempt to put the work in a general ornithological context. [ROBERT MOSS]

**Guide to Birds of the Falkland Islands.** By Robin W. Woods. (Anthony Nelson Ltd, Oswestry, 1988. 256 pages. £14.95) The best field guide and most comprehensive reference book yet to Falklands' birds. Bio, geo and demo perspectives will be very useful for visitors to this ornithological frontier. Provides a record of 185 species, including all authentic extralimitals to date. Descriptions are detailed, but not over-long: some are the best to date in vernacular literature. Franklin Coombs is not my favourite illustrator: his passerines look like museum skins. [KEVIN T. STANDRING]

*Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ*



The aim of this occasional series is to pass on tips which may improve readers' fieldcraft when birdwatching. For each topic, the authors will not only have drawn on their own experience, but also summarised advice gleaned from other specialists.

## 1. Trail-walking

The following advice and comments are derived mostly from the requirements of watching in groups on narrow trails in tropical or semitropical forest, but provide equal benefits in dense woodland anywhere.

There are two benefits to be derived from moving quietly. First, shy species are not frightened and are more likely to be seen; secondly, soft calls and scufflings (as a bird turns leaves in search of food) are more likely to be heard, and the bird spotted before it freezes or disappears. When walking, therefore, it pays to take every step carefully, not only avoiding sticks or dead branches which may crack loudly, but also lifting one's feet well up and placing them down vertically, to minimise movement of dry leaves underfoot. Indeed, there is great benefit in avoiding all unnecessary noise, such as camera equipment or telescope tripods which rattle and clothing which rustles. Never talk, except in whispers, and then only if it is essential—it is much quieter to touch your companion on the shoulder and then point, than to say 'Look!' and then 'It's there!'. Unnecessary movement should also be avoided, of course, since not only does movement draw attention to the group and, perhaps, frighten birds away, but movement also causes noise. The very act of

pointing out a bird can often cause it to fly. If pointing is necessary, it is best to extend the arm gradually, rather than suddenly, and not wave it around.

Keeping close together is another aid to unobtrusive progression on a forest trail or woodland path—close enough to touch rather than talk and to whisper rather than shout. A close group also disturbs an area once, whereas a straggling line of observers disturbs each area again and again, is more conspicuous, and noisier. If there is a good bird to be seen, it is more likely to be spotted by the first person in a group or line; so, if everyone is close together, there is a better chance that everyone will see it. In a straggling group, the bird may have gone by the time the backmarkers have caught up, and in catching up they will probably have hurried (perhaps noisily) in order to see what everyone else is looking at, thereby making it even more likely that it will have been frightened away.

The advice so far, therefore, is basically **KEEP QUIET** and **KEEP CLOSE**. It follows from this that there will often be instances when those at the front are looking at something, pointing perhaps, and using binoculars, whilst those at the back can not only see nothing, but also do not know what it is that they are missing. There is nothing more frustrating. It is the duty of everyone, therefore, to ensure that the person behind them is kept fully informed, by means of gentle signals and subdued whispers. Those at the back will thus learn, by messages passed along the line, whether they are missing something which they want to try to see by moving forward, or whether it is something that they do not mind missing, so can remain relaxed at the rear of the group.

When an interesting bird is spotted, everyone should immediately (quietly and gently) close up with the leaders. In woodland, a bird ahead will often be visible on only one line, between the trees, so it is important to be close to whoever can see the bird. Closing up also ensures that whispered discussion is as quiet as possible. As soon as those at the front have had a good look, they should move aside or back, to allow other people to come to the front to see the bird.

Although there will be occasions when the leading observers miss a bird and it is first seen by someone else, most birds are seen (or heard) first by those at the front of a line walking along a forest trail. It is clearly sensible, therefore, for the experienced ornithological leader always to lead—nobody should ever go on ahead of him or her, even by a few metres. Anyone who wants to watch away from the group should drop back (having informed the leader first), but never go on in front.

If a bird is accidentally disturbed, the leading observers may be the only ones to see it. Courtesy demands, therefore, that those other than the group leader alternate positions during the day, perhaps changing every ten minutes or so. The most efficient way to do this is for the person who is second to step aside, allow all the others to pass and then take up the last place. Everyone, thus, gets a turn to be in the most advantageous position, close to the leader.

Similarly, anyone who wants to look at a bird (or the scenery or an insect or a plant) which interests them, but not the rest of the group,

should step aside to do so, in order that the rest of the group can file past and is not held up.

There are, thus, various ways in which a small group of birdwatchers can maximise their observing efficiency. We have also described various points of trail etiquette. There is one final point. It is often assumed that one should move slowly through woodland, cautiously creeping up on birds and other wildlife. But however carefully an observer or a group may walk through woodland, silence is an impossibility. It may on occasions pay to travel quickly (but as quietly as possible) along a trail, thereby surprising the shy birds which would have gone or hidden long before a slow-moving observer came close to them. Alternating slow and fast travel—say a kilometre of one followed by a kilometre of the other—may prove to be the most productive way to find the greatest variety of species.

The points made above are often very obvious, and perhaps the majority of *BB* readers were already aware of most of them. We hope, however, that some suggestions will have been new, that a summary will have been helpful, and that our experience will assist not only individuals, but also those leading (or taking part in) trips such as bird club outings.

### Acknowledgments

We are grateful to leaders for the bird tour firms *Birding*, *Birdquest*, *Cygnus*, *Ornitholidays* and *Sunbird*, Mark Beaman, Paul Dukes, David Fisher, John Gooders, Nigel Redman and Iain Robertson, for their comments on the first draft of this article.

PHILIP D. ROUND and J. T. R. SHARROCK  
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## Diary dates

This list covers January to December 1989

**6th-8th January** BTO RINGING AND MIGRATION CONFERENCE. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Details from Chris Mead, BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR.

**16th January** RSPB OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF CENTENARY. Coinciding with the Royal Mail's RSPB Centenary stamp issue.

**21st January** RSPB FILM PREMIÈRE. Royal Festival Hall. Details from Film Show Organiser, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

**28th-29th January** YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB INTERNATIONAL COMMON BIRD SURVEY. (RSPB Centenary Event.) Details

from YOC, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

**31st January** Closing date for entries for 'Bird Photograph of the Year'.

**31st January** Closing date for 'Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs'.

**31st January-5th February** INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON WESTERN PALEARCTIC GEESE. Federal Republic of Germany. Details from Tony Fox, The Wildfowl Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BT.

**7th February** BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB. Dr A. J. Knystautas on 'Birds of the Soviet Union'. Central London. Non-

members should write (enclosing SAE) at least 21 days before to Hon. Secretary, R. E. F. Peal, 2 Chestnut Lane, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3AR.

**17th February** RSPB 100TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION. Didsbury, Manchester. Details from RSPB.

**4th March** BTO/ESSEX BIRDWATCHING SOCIETY ONE-DAY CONFERENCE. Essex Institute of Higher Education, Brentwood. Details from Geoff Gibbs, 72 Orchard Piece, Blackmore, Ingatestone, Essex CM4 0RZ.

**4th March** SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB/BTO ONE-DAY SCOTTISH BIRDWATCHERS' CONFERENCE. Near Perth. Details from SOC, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

**10th-12th March** RSPB/IRISH WILDBIRD CONSERVANCY ALL-IRELAND CONFERENCE. Conway Hotel, Dunmurry, Belfast, Northern Ireland. Details from RSPB Northern Ireland Office, Belvoir Park Forest, Belfast BT8 4QT, Northern Ireland.

**14th March** BOC. Dr Werner Suter on 'Cormorants wintering in Switzerland'. Central London. Details from Hon. Secretary.

**14th March** Closing date for entries for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year'.

**18th March** WILTSHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY ONE-DAY CONFERENCE. Near Devizes. Details from John Govett, 19 Manton Close, Trowbridge, Wiltshire BA14 0RZ.

**28th March-9th May** YOC FLIGHT-LINE. Migration phone-in. Telephone Sandy (0767) 80551. Tuesdays only, 5.30 p.m.-7.00 p.m. Records from adults welcomed.

**7th-9th April** RSPB CENTENARY MEMBERS' WEEKEND. York University. Details from Conference Office, RSPB.

**13th-16th April** BOU ANNUAL CONFERENCE. On 'Applied Ornithology'. Surrey University, Guildford. Details from BOU, c/o The British Museum (Natural History), Sub-department of Ornithology, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP.

**9th May** BOC. Dr R. A. F. Cox on 'North Sea birds'. Central London. Details from Hon. Secretary.

**15th-20th May** INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR BIRD PRESERVATION EUROPEAN MEET-

ING. Turkey. Details from ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ.

**27th-29th May** RSPB/ZEISS WEST GERMANY SPONSORED BIRDWATCH & EUROPEAN BIRDWATCH. Details from RSPB.

**27th-29th May** YOC NATWEST SPONSORED BIRDWATCH. Details from YOC.

**15th July** ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE MIDDLE EAST AGM. Details from OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

**August** RSPB EXHIBITION. Natural History Museum, London. Details from RSPB.

**28th August-1st September** INTERNATIONAL BIRD CENSUS COMMITTEE/EUROPEAN ORNITHOLOGICAL ATLAS COMMITTEE. XI INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BIRD CENSUS AND ATLAS WORK. Prague, Czechoslovakia. 'Utilisation of birds in ecological monitoring.' Details from Dr Karel Štastný, Institute of Applied Ecology and Ecotechnology, Agricultural University Prague, 281 63 Kostelec nad Černými lesy, Czechoslovakia.

**15th-17th September** BOU AUTUMN SCIENTIFIC MEETING. 'Cost of reproduction in birds.' Glasgow University. Details from BOU.

**30th September** RSPB SCOTTISH MEMBERS' DAY & RSPB AGM. Details from RSPB.

**4th November** BTO/SURREY BIRD CLUB ONE-DAY CONFERENCE. Guildford. Details from Dr Ernest Garcia, 2 Busdens Close, Milford, Godalming, Surrey GU8 5JS.

**24th November** RSPB GALA CONCERT. Royal Albert Hall, London. Details from RSPB.

**1st-3rd December** BTO ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Details from Mrs Audrey Causer, BTO.

**2nd-3rd December** YOC ACTION FOR BIRDS AND PEOPLE WEEKEND. Details from YOC.

**8th-10th December** NATIONAL EXHIBITION OF CAGE AND AVIARY BIRDS. National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham. Details from Brian Byles, Editor, 'Cage and Aviary Birds', Prospect House, 9-13 Ewell Road, Cheam, Sutton, Surrey SM1 4QQ.

**9th December** ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB AGM. London. Details from Publicity Officer, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

# Announcements

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**Thank you to our sponsors** The Editorial Board would like to give special thanks to the firms and organisations which have helped *BB* with sponsorship during 1988:

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ZEISS West Germany.....	sponsors of the Rarities Committee and colour plates for several identification papers and notes

## Special offer to 'BB' subscribers

**The Dutch All-year Atlas: 'Atlas van de Nederlandse Vogels'** The full price for this well-reviewed 'gigantic and magnificent' atlas of the Netherlands (see *Brit. Birds* 81: 475), covering all species and with maps for all 12 months of the year, is usually £21.00, but, by agreement with the publishers, we can now offer it to *BB* subscribers for £18.00, POST FREE. Please use the British BirdShop form on pages xi & xii.

**New books in British BirdShop** A total of 18 books has been added to the British BirdShop list this month, many of them being reviewed in this issue of *British Birds*. Please note especially those shown in RED on pages xi & xii.

Apart from the new special offer (see Dutch Atlas announcement above), *British Birds* subscribers can still obtain *International Bird Identification*, Chandler's *North Atlantic Shorebirds*, Goodwin's *Crows of the World*, Knystautas's *The Natural History of the USSR* and *Frontiers of Bird Identification* at special reduced prices.

Please note, also, that Ali & Ripley's compact edition of the *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan* has at last arrived from India and is in stock.

Your use of British BirdShop helps to subsidise every *British Birds* subscription. Please look at pages xi & xii.

**Free advertising for subscribers** For a limited period, individual personal subscribers may use the classified advertising pages FREE OF CHARGE for advertisements selling single ornithological items (a pair of binoculars, a telescope, a book, a volume of magazines, etc.). Send your advertisement (not more than 30 words), *quoting your personal BB Reference Number*, to Free BB advertising, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

**Binding your 'BB'** Standard book-binding of *BB* issues costs £14.00 per volume. Use the form on the back of the index, and send yours in to arrive *before* one of the four annual deadlines: 15th January, 15th March, 1st July and 1st October. The binders' address is: Chapman Brooks Bookbinders Ltd, 173 Elmers End Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 4SZ.

Loose binders are also available, as usual, through British BirdShop, at £6.95 (see page xii).

**Your January issue** As usual, the January issue will be despatched in mid month (rather than in the last week of the preceding month, as with all other issues). This is partly the result of Christmas and New Year holidays affecting our and our printer's work schedules, but is also deliberately designed to give time for as many subscriptions as possible to be included in the new year's address list. Expect your January issue in the second half of the month (or in February, if you have not resubscribed before 15th December).

**Bird Photograph of the Year** In 1989, this annual competition will again be jointly sponsored by Christopher Helm Publishing Ltd and William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. The full rules (similar to those last year, *Brit. Birds* 81: 31-32) will be published next month. The closing date is Monday 31st January 1989.

**Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs** The closing date for submission of prints for the annual selection is Monday 31st January 1989. The full rules (similar to those last year, *Brit. Birds* 81: 33) will be published next month.

**Bird Illustrator of the Year** The closing date for this competition, which will again be sponsored by Kowa telescopes, is 14th March 1989. Required dimensions of entries will be published with the rules in the January 1989 issue.

## Requests

**Plumages of gannets** Ed Mackrill is preparing a short paper for *British Birds* on the occurrence in Britain and western Europe of Gannets *Sula bassana* showing the characteristics of Cape Gannet *S. capensis* and Australasian Gannet *S. serrator* (plate 354). Ed has personally recorded over 200 such individuals since 1986 (in England, Scotland, Morocco and Spain), suggesting that the plumage type is not rare. He asks that sea-watchers should look carefully at *all* Gannets and send details of their observations to him at Welton-le-Marsh, Spilsby, Lincolnshire PE23 5SY.



354. Gannet *Sula bassana* showing characteristics of Cape Gannet *S. capensis* and Australasian Gannet *S. serrator*, Cornwall, September 1987 (Ed Mackrill)

**Slender-billed Curlew surveys** The Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* has suffered a drastic decline this century and is now almost certainly the rarest migratory bird in the Western Palearctic, with perhaps only 100 individuals surviving. In order to investigate the reasons for this decline and to attempt to counter it, the International Council for Bird Preservation has launched a two-year project on the species. The Slender-billed Curlew has been regularly recorded on passage in Turkey, Hungary,



Yugoslavia (Vojvodina), Romania (Dobroudgea), Austria, Greece and Italy, with accidental records from most non-Scandinavian European countries. The main wintering sites appear to be in Tunisia and Morocco, with scattered records in the Middle East. No funds are available from ICBP, but anyone willing to spend time surveying suitable wetland for the species should contact the project co-ordinator for further details, specifying which country they are visiting and at what time of year: Adam Gretton, ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ; tel: Cambridge (0223) 277318.

**Records of Moroccan birds** Michel Thévenot, 'European news' correspondent for Morocco, is now working in France on Moroccan ornithology, particularly concerning an *Atlas of Breeding Birds* and a *Checklist of Birds in Morocco*. He requests that all relevant records of observations concerning birds in Morocco should be sent to him at École Pratique des Hautes Études, Laboratoire de Biogéographie et Écologie des Vertébrés Méditerranéens, Case 100, Université de Montpellier II, Place Eugène Bataillon, F-34060 Montpellier Cedex, France.

**Gambian records** The Gambian Ornithological Society would greatly welcome the receipt of records from the many birdwatchers who now visit The Gambia, for inclusion in its annual report. All records will be acknowledged, and contributors will each receive a copy of those reports which GOS members receive free (and will be able to obtain post-free copies of those reports for which members pay). Please send lists (with date and locality for each record) airmail to: C. P. A. White, Gambian Ornithological Society, PO Box 757, Banjul, The Gambia, West Africa.

**Snow-field feeding by birds** Snow fields and even small patches of late snow which lie in arctic and alpine situations frequently attract feeding birds for a variety of reasons. I am hoping to draft a review of this phenomenon and would be very pleased to receive unusual observations of any species feeding on the surface of snow in lowland/upland/arctic/temperate settings. Details of the numbers and species of birds involved, any insight into the possible food items involved, and locality, habitat, and circumstances would be appreciated. Any accounts of birds which are clearly *choosing* to feed on snow in preference to foraging elsewhere would be especially interesting. Please send observations from Britain and Ireland or overseas to Dr Tony Fox, The Wildfowl Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BT.

## News and comment

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*Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett*

**Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'**

**The poisoning continues** We support *Scottish Bird News* (September 1988) in its description of the continuing illegal use of poisons in the remoter parts of Scotland as 'a national disgrace'. The report notes that RSPB Scotland had knowledge of 13 incidents in the first half of this year. In one case, Keith Brockie found a male Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* dead on its nest in the Caenlochan National Nature Reserve.

It had almost certainly picked up poison from a neighbouring estate and carried it back to the nest. In another incident, which received much publicity in the national press, two Golden Eagles were found dead on Islay by holidaymakers. Any birdwatchers who find dead raptors or evidence of attempts to kill them should note full details and then contact their nearest RSPB office.

**Bradford's birds** We have been sent a copy of the first report, covering 1987, of the Bradford Ornithological Group, which was formed in January of that year. The report is set out in conventional style, with a weather and ornithological review followed by the species list, the bulk of the report, in which it was good to see that all species (even the most common) appear to get at least one line. There is also a ringing report. Further details are obtainable from Chris Roberts, Science Department, Old Building, Bradford and Ilkley Community

College, Great Horton Road, Bradford BD7 1AY.

**Penguin takes a walk** A report in *The Daily Telegraph* of 19th September 1988 says that the Police suspect that a penguin missing from the Penscynor Wildlife Park in West Glamorgan was stolen in a carrier bag. With respect, they obviously have no idea of how quickly a penguin could demolish such a means of transport! It may, of course, have been very tame; so, if you see a wandering penguin . . .

## If the caption fits . . .

The competition to supply an apt caption to Hans Schouten's photograph of a Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* (*Brit. Birds* 80: plate 331, repeated here) produced a wide range of suggestions. The following are our top choices.

1. "I haven't touched your \*\*\*\*\* rainbow trout—look!" (Dr Mick Marquiss)
2. "Look! No wings!" (Lord Glen-devon)
3. "Oh, no! Not fish AGAIN!" (Kieran Sharrock)
4. "Who said anything about Pisa? I'd settle for a perch any day." (M. H. Dunn)
5. "Timber!" (Mrs Margaret Smith, and Bernard Webb, independently)
6. "\*\*\*\*\* water-skiers!" (D. G. P. Chatfield)



The winner, Dr Mick Marquiss, will receive a prize of copies of *Frontiers of Bird Identification* and *The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic*.

# Recent reports

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*Compiled by Mark Boyd*

This summary covers the period 17th October to 13th November 1988

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

**Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* Milford on Sea (Hampshire), from 5th November.

**Baikal Teal** *Anas formosa* Titchwell (Norfolk), 13th November.

**Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* Chew Valley Lake (Avon), 13th November.

**Waxwing** *Bombycilla garrulus* British east coast, major invasion from around 24th October, with many hundreds of individuals from Kent to Shetland, including large flocks, such as 225 in Middlesbrough (Cleveland), 13th November.

**Gray Catbird** *Dumetella carolinensis* Cott Valley (Cornwall), 28th October.

**Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* South Ronaldsay (Orkney), 28th October.

**Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis* St Mary's (Scilly), 1st November.

**Savi's Warbler** *Locustella luscinioides* Eastern race *fuscus*, Icklesham (East Sussex), 23rd October.

**Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus* Icklesham, 15th October; St Agnes (Scilly), 18th October; Stanpit (Dorset), 21st October; Stodmarsh (Kent), 25th October; Blacktoft Sands (Humberside), 12th November.

**Short-toed Treecreeper** *Certhia brachydactyla* Sandwich Bay (Kent), 19th-24th October.

**Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* Stodmarsh, from 5th November.

**Two-barred Crossbill** *Loxia leucoptera* Haslingden (Lancashire), 6th November.

## Corrections

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### VOLUME 80

#### Pages

597 & 598 FIELD IDENTIFICATION OF RADDE'S AND DUSKY WARBLERS Plates 303 and 304: photographer was J. R. Clarkson (not J. M. Clarkson).

626 HEAD-SHAKING OF GARGANEY AND TEAL WHILE FEEDING See revised version: *Brit. Birds* 81: 394-395.

### VOLUME 81

#### Pages

81 REVIEW *Ducks of Sub-Saharan Africa* 37 colour plates (not 26 colour plates).

156 BINOCULARS AND TELESCOPES SURVEY 1988 Line 51: '11%' should read '3%'.

226 BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR Line 32: photographer of Magpie and Buzzard was Mike Wilkes (not P. Munsterman).

450 CLIFF SWALLOW: NEW TO BRITAIN AND IRELAND Plate 216: photographer was R. H. Chittenden (not C. R. Chittenden).

## Coming soon . . .

---

**A**mong the exciting contributions due for publication in the next few months, we can look forward to papers on the following subjects:

Habitat and breeding of Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* in lowland Britain

Identification of small skuas *Stercorarius*, with paintings by Lars Jonsson

Identification of Gull-billed Terns *Gelochelidon nilotica*, with paintings by Alan Harris

Identification of marsh terns *Chlidonias*, with illustrations by Per Alström

Winter roosting by Wrens *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris* in Britain

Behaviour of Magpies *Pica pica*

# ‘The Famous Grouse’ Scotch whisky Christmas puzzle

---



In 1987, a keen twitcher managed to see a 20th and a 23rd on the same day, exactly ten days after seeing an even rarer species. Later in the same season, he travelled farther than on any of his previous trips to see the rarest of his five birds, but then had to go in the opposite direction to see a 19th the very next day. On each trip, he had to travel from his home county through only one intermediate county before getting to the one where the rarity had been found.

A *BB* reader, who enjoyed counting as well as identifying birds (he always carried out Wildfowl Counts in winter and a Common Birds Census in summer, as well as visiting bird observatories in spring and autumn), noted interesting patterns in the birds that he saw in 1988.

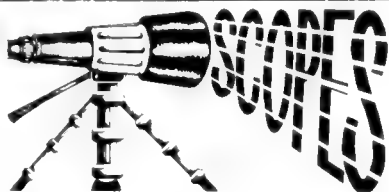
The two commonest seabird species were in July and August, with a common wader in the month before and another in the month after. In the two spring months preceding the first wader, he saw two rare seabirds (loosely speaking), and, in the two late-autumn months after the second wader, he saw his two rarest birds, both from America. The species which he saw in the first two months of the year could both have been found during his Wildfowl Counting, one very common but the other a rare diver. In the last month of the year, his searching revealed a very appropriate discovery.

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What did he find in December?

Send your answers to these three questions, and your own name and address, on a postcard to Christmas Puzzle, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th January 1989. The three entrants who give the correct answers and whose entries are selected in the draw will each receive a bottle of *The Famous Grouse* Scotch whisky.



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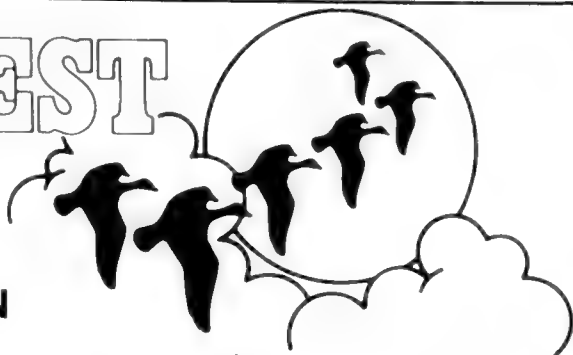
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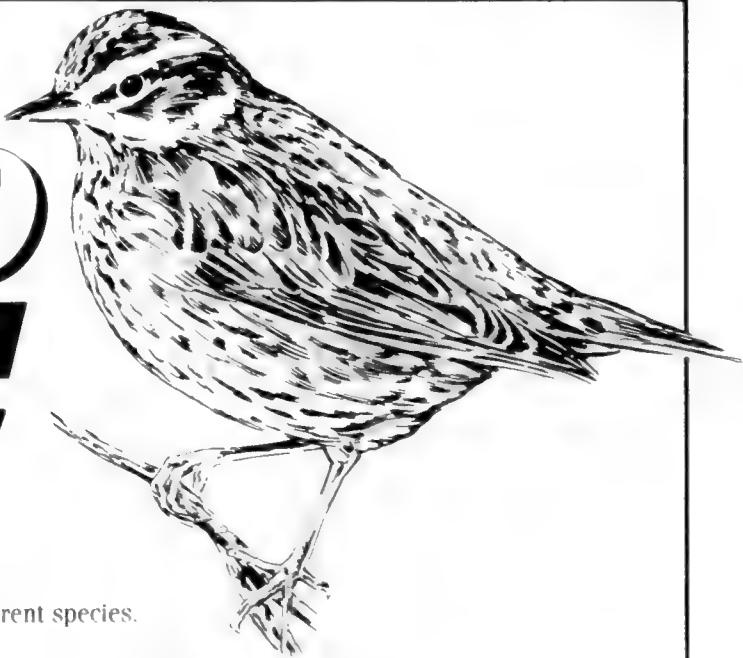
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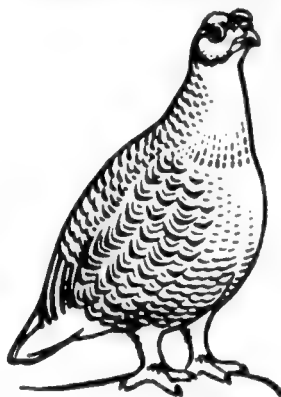
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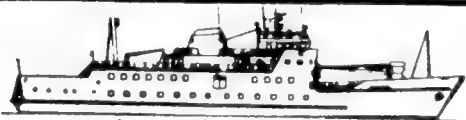
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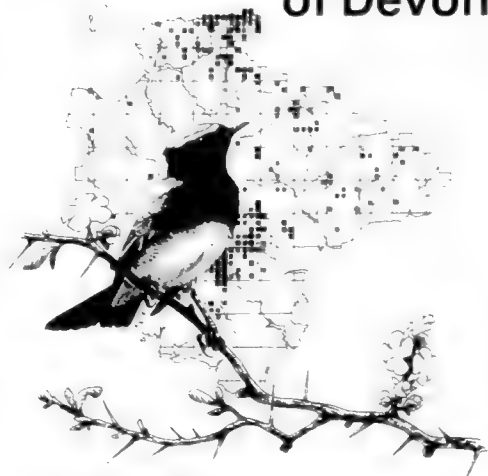
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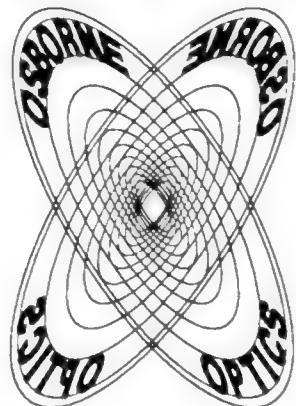
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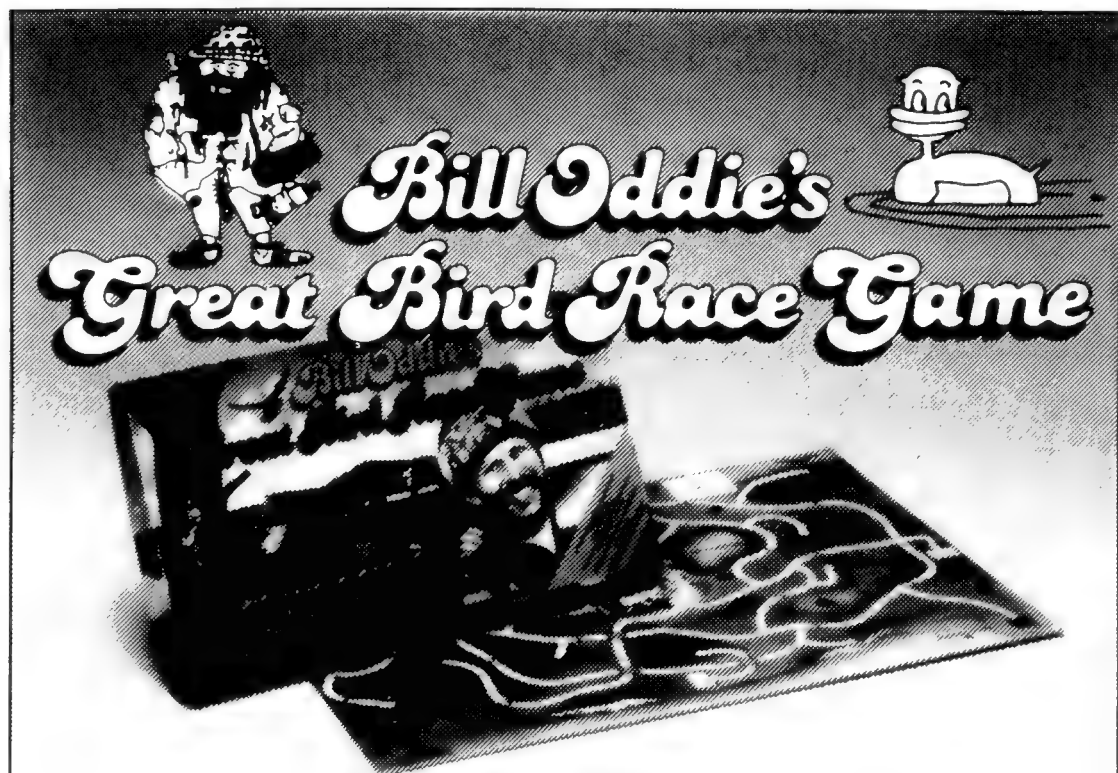
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**Front cover:** Red-legged Partridges (*Robert Gillmor*); the original drawing of this month's cover design, measuring 18.6 × 20.8 cm, is for sale at postal auction (see page 31 in January issue for procedure)













